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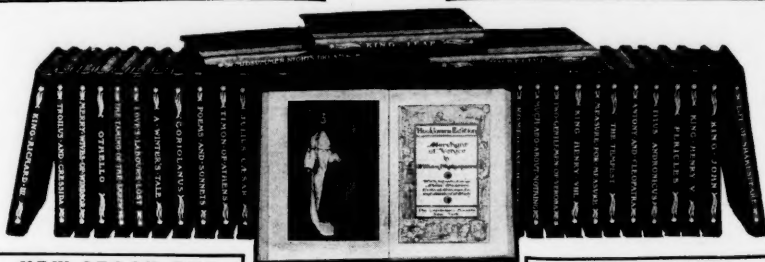
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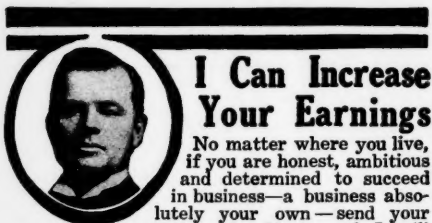
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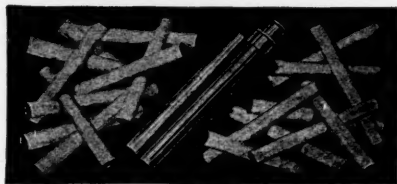
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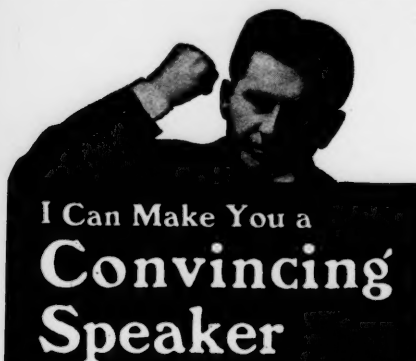
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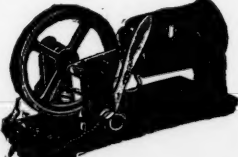
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Vol. XIV

SMITH'S MAGAZINE

No. 4

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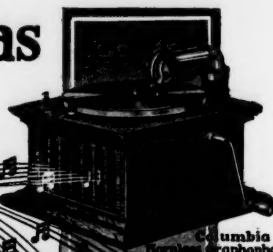
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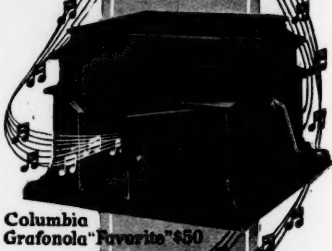
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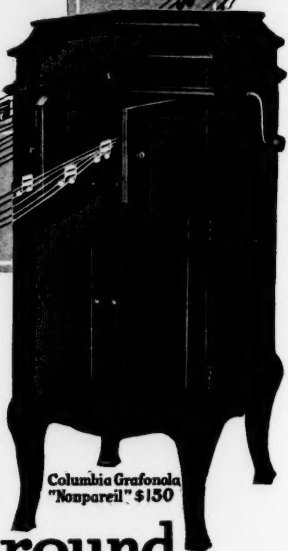
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VOLUME 14

JANUARY, 1912

NUMBER 4



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Miss Flora Zabelle
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"The Kiss Waltz"

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In "The Spendthrift"

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AN ARCHITECT of FATE

By
**EMMA
LEE
WALTON**

Author of "The Keeper," "The Twig," "The Making of Dick Larrabee," Etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY SIGURD SCHOU

CHAPTER I.

THE shabby little room, grimy with a city's soot, greasy with steam and finger prints, dusty and disheartening, stood empty of patrons for the first time in many an hour.

Madame Zingarella, the palmist, stretched her fat self lazily in her wide chair, and yawned from sheer weariness. She had read lines until her eyes ached, hedging against direct assertion, dodging responsibility, fencing when cornered, and she was sick of it all.

They had been an unusually commonplace lot, the customers, even for a Thursday, and there had been little she could safely promise save love affairs and journeys. The one it would never be too late for; the other was ambiguous, just what constituted a journey depending somewhat on the individual ambition. A ripple of excitement had been caused by a large German woman who had returned in some indignation to inquire why she had sold her property at too low a figure, after being promised a large sum by the seer, but Madame Zingarella did not like that sort of excitement.

"I did not say you was to sell your land to the first that offered," she de-

clared. "I said you'd get a so-to-speak offer for it, that's what I said. I says: 'It's take it or leave it,' I says, like that. Of course if you takes it, and gets a better offer after, it ain't me that's to blame. I sh'd say not!"

It had certainly been a hard and trying day, and taken with the fact that a man had given her a bad piece of money, an unprofitable one. She had a vague feeling that her patrons had not been entirely satisfied with her predictions, though she had been as prodigal of promises as she was fertile in ideas, and dissatisfied customers meant lack of patronage. Madame Anastasia, a block away, if one might believe all another said, never had commonplace days and dissatisfied customers. It was only the week before that a thief had been in to have his fortune told, and once she had had a lady in an automobile.

The grimy pictures of noted palms, the broken sofa with its soiled grandeur of afghan, the once-gorgeous Turkish curtains, all the trappings of her mystic calling, lost their impressive power the moment she was alone. It was the novice who would be impressed, not one who had sat there for weeks as she had.

Even this, the noon hour, held her at her post, for midday custom was oft-times brisk, and the appetizing smell of bacon was unable to stir her from the spot where passers-by could see her in her imposing velvet gown. Mr. Doyle, the seer's worthy spouse, must prepare and enjoy his bacon alone, lest one should come and be sent away by an empty studio. Madame Zingarella sighed, and yawned again with hunger and weariness.

"You might shut the door so's I don't smell it," she called to the man. "I ain't going to wait much longer. I don't believe I'm going to get any noon-hour folks to-day."

"Ain't no telling," Doyle's cheery voice responded. "Stick it out a while longer, and I'll wash your dishes, too. I ain't got to get back on my job till half past one."

Into the long, wearisome silence that followed there fell the noise of the knob turning timidly. The seer raised rapt eyes to the ceiling, and, folding her hands solemnly, awaited the incoming patron. There was so long a pause, however, that she deserted her pose to inquire its cause, and looked squarely into the face of Bertha, lady's maid to Eleanor Maitland, of the Boulevard. Not that she knew her as such, for she did not, recognizing her only as another silver quarter to be rung on the table before acceptance.

"I'd like my fortune told," the newcomer faltered. "For twenty-five cents, ain't it?"

"Yes, madame. Pray be seated. For fifty cents I can give you a clairvoyant reading. Wouldn't you be better pleased with clairvoyance?"

The girl shook her head.

"I ain't brought but a quarter," she said hesitatingly. "And I ain't got so much time left. Do I sit here?"

Deciding of a sudden that she had to do with a manicurist, Madame Zingarella laid her plans, the while she made her customer comfortable at the other side of the shaky little table. She took the young woman's hand, and raised her magnifying glass.

"I see hard times in the past," she

began indifferently. "You've had to work since you was a kid. Better days coming, though, if you act right. Everything depends on what you do. See? I should guess maybe about the time you're twenty-one the thing'll begin to change."

"It's about time to get busy," the girl faltered timidly. "I'm going to be twenty-one next month. Ain't there no money?"

"Enough," said the seer cautiously. "I see that you're never going to come to want, but you ain't going to be no millionaire, not so far's I can see."

The girl's face fell.

"Course I'm new on the job," she said slowly. "And sort of green yet, and there ain't such a slew o' money in it, after all, but I thought maybe I could save."

Zingarella nodded impressively

"You can hold onto your dollar, all right, all right," she said. "But you ain't so stingy as some, I sh'd say not! Only you got expenses. You'll be thrown with rich folks, and come right close to 'em, and some o' their money you'll get, but you ain't one of 'em, not by a long sight."

"Ain't I to get married once?" the girl asked, flushing. "I'd like sure to know that already."

Madame Zingarella made a mental note, and used it at once.

"I see a nice German feller," she said thoughtfully, and as if the confession hurt. "Young, but not so awful handsome. Him's the one."

The girl did not change color.

"I ain't knowing anybody. Everybody else's got fellers but me," she sighed. "You don't get to know many on my job what ain't married."

"You want to cut out fancy fellers," the seer warned her. "To take this here simple one is best, and be thankful you're let off so easy without no worry."

Madame Zingarella leaned back in her chair, and sighed wearily.

"If there's any question you'd like to ask, go ahead," she said generously. "For gracious' sake, Doyle, shut that door!"

The door closed with emphasis as though urged to action by a hasty foot, and Madame Zingarella reassumed her professional manner.

"Yo're going to die a long ways from where you was born," she declared. "But you ain't caring. Where your hat's hung there's your home, and there ain't no journeys to speak of after a long one when you was awful young. You got some French blood in you. Got any questions?"

"How'd you know about my grandma being French?" the girl asked, wide-eyed. "We was from near Alsace."

"It's sort of second night," Madame Zingarella yawned. "Any questions?"

The girl thought a moment.

"Where is it I'll meet him?" she asked. "I ain't thrown with men."

"Go right along helping folks," said Madame Zingarella patronizingly. "Help these here other girls to get along in their love affairs, and you'll get on. Help the nearest one you see, and you'll have a bunch o' happiness. Remember that. Help the first one you happen on all you can, and see what'll come. Twenty-five cents, please."

Before she realized that her interview was over, Bertha found herself outside again on the sidewalk, where she could see Madame Zingarella hastening to her dining room, and glanced away to the park, where the call of spring was being answered by couples arm in arm, who sauntered under the trees looking for pleasant sheltered spots. She sighed, and turned away. Miss Maitland was going to a tea, and would need her, and, besides, it wasn't her turn to have an afternoon off. She must hurry back. Maybe she could snatch a bite to eat before she was called upstairs.

The cook and the housemaid were curious to know where she had been, but she kept her own counsel. The chauffeur, who was the cook's husband, was just finishing his lunch in the servants' dining room, and he chaffed her about her trip without any satisfaction to himself.

"She had a date with a feller for the afternoon," he said, slapping butter on a thick slice of bread. "And she had to run out and tell him she couldn't go. She's got her best hat on, see? Gee, I wish I didn't have to take the old machine way up to Easton this afternoon. The roads is bum after the fierce rains. Help yourself, Bertha. I got all I want."

It did not take Bertha long to see that her young lady was not happy. She was not impatient, for her sunny nature always kept her kindly, but her mind was on something else that worried her, and Bertha, having to ask her twice what veil she wanted, and being sentimentally inclined, decided it was a man.

"The white veil with the large mesh," the young lady answered absently. "By the way, Bertha, I spilled some ink on the edge of the rug just now. See that something is done for it, please. I rang for you, but Aline said you were out."

"Yes'm. I was to a fortune teller's, miss."

A shadow of a frown passed over Miss Maitland's face, and she smiled wistfully.

"If fortune tellers could straighten out our affairs for us," she sighed, "what a wonderfully happy world we would have! Oh, Bertha?"

"Yes, miss?"

"When I leave, I wish you'd see that those papers in my basket are burned. See to it yourself; understand? You may go out for the afternoon, and please see that this note is delivered. It is properly addressed. I don't like that white veil, after all. I'll take the blue one. Don't forget the papers."

She went in search of her mother, and Bertha, watching from the window, saw them get into the auto and whirl away. Cautiously listening to make sure of being alone, she sank on the floor by the wastebasket, and gazed into it at the tiny fragments of note paper that had been fiercely thrust into its depths. Why did Miss Eleanor want them burned? What her French imagination could not supply her German patience brought to light, and in



'And there had been little she could safely promise save love affairs and journeys.

one short hour she had pieced together two notes that gave her her clew.

Miss Maitland had quarreled with the nice Mr. Tracy, who always raised his hat when he met Bertha in the street, and always said good evening when Aline answered his ring. Neither note said what the trouble was, but one apologized on the part of Mr. Tracy, and humbly requested to be permitted to call.

Bertha shook her head over its tone, for it showed plainly enough that he considered himself abused, and she pondered it rapidly and well as she bore away the basket to the burning. Mr. Tracy had said that if he did not

hear from her he should call on Thursday evening. The other shredded note was an answer repented of, in which she had written only: "Come. It doesn't pay to be 'mad.'" Evidently, then, the note she was to deliver was written to keep him away, as it was addressed to Gordon Tracy a few blocks off.

The teakettle, kept steamingly hot for occasional coffees, aided by a strong curiosity and the safety of an empty kitchen, tempted and conquered her. The note, steamed open, was brief, and the color left

Bertha's face at the first glance. Here was Fate pointing the way to her own happiness! Had not the woman said so? With a glance over her shoulder and a shiver of apprehension, Bertha lifted the stove lid, and dropped the little cruel note on the hot coals.

CHAPTER II.

Gordon Tracy, favored by fortune, envied by many souls less dowered, was, after all, a simple American, unspoiled by prosperous days, kindly and whole-souled. No cloud, even as large as a man's hand, had ever darkened his horizon until the unlucky day when he

had quarreled with Eleanor Maitland over the dance she had given to Oliver Stillwell. She had so long saved dances for him that he had grown to expect it without asking, and had resented the withdrawal of the privilege. Eleanor had said they were not children to do things "just because," and then had gone away a second time on the arm of the too-attentive Stillwell.

To Gordon it had seemed a most unreasonable, arbitrary act that led to a remarkable discovery. He had known Eleanor for years, and now he knew he loved her—as no other man had ever loved a girl, he told himself. At first he furiously declared that he should never tell her so, it was so excellent a thing that he had found her out in time; and then his anger cooled, and he realized only that he was miserable, miserable.

He spent a few days at Atlantic City restlessly, he came back to town, and astonished the office force by doing real work and absenting himself from social affairs, and then he began composing notes to Eleanor Maitland.

It was only after he had written five that he composed one that almost satisfied him. It sounded cold, and even he could see that he had worked himself and his injured feelings too plainly into the lines of polite and stilted apology, but he mailed it. The hours that followed were nervous one, for he hoped she would at least telephone, but as each one passed it strengthened his hope that he was forgiven. Once given that happy assurance, nothing should prevent his pouring out to her the love that was making him a different man. His note had said that he should come unless she wrote him she did not wish it, and here it was five—six—seven o'clock, and now no word.

At a little after eight, when he had walked around the block four times in order to avoid a too-early call, he rang the Maitland bell, his heart beating a tattoo that he could hear over the noises of the street. In another minute he could tell her what it seemed he must shout to the world at large in his great hopeful joy.

"I'm sorry, sir," Aline said, with real regret, "but Miss Maitland has gone to the theater with Mr. Stillwell, sir."

Gordon's castle fell crashing about his ears. She had gone with Oliver Stillwell when she knew he was coming! His face showed his dismay, and Aline was sympathetic and talkative.

"Bertha tells me it was unexpected like," she explained kindly. "It was somebody calls up about six o'clock, and says would she go in a box, and to let Mr. Stillwell know when she's ready. Bertha calls up Mr. Stillwell herself, who the lady said was to go with her. She'll be sorry, sir."

She had not thought his note of sufficient importance to answer.

Gordon turned away with a heavy heart. At first he was only sorry for himself, and then his anger increased until the very newsboy on the corner was an annoyance. The boy's voice was harsh and unsympathetic, and his subject was far from encouraging.

"Oxtry poiper!" he called. "All about the awful suicide and mur-r-der! Oxtry here! Poiper, sir?"

Gordon shook him off, and strode away. A new resolution seized him, and he looked with a new feeling at the invitations he had scorned a few hours before. These should be his weapons, and he would show her that he was not a man to be cast down by the mere indifference of a girl.

He would be gay, at least in appearance, outwardly content, and to that end he would accept the kindnesses of these many hostesses immediately. As a good beginning, he penned cordial notes to surprised women who had never been able to coax him out before, and began to anticipate with real pleasure the prospect of attending the various entertainments.

That his delight lay solely in the hope that Eleanor might also be a guest at these houses, he did not acknowledge even to himself. He was not above deceiving himself into thinking that he had begun to forget her, with the immense egotism of the man who prides himself on his splendid indifference. He did not realize that, in secretly de-

claring he cared no whit whether he ever saw her again, he had to deal with an earthly divinity that was endeavoring to shape his ends regardless of his own resolution in regard to any rough hewing.

Bertha, masquerading as Cupid, was not making a success of her first attempt at matchmaking.

At the first houses to which Gordon went, he was conscious of a keen disappointment and unrest he did not understand. He had accepted invitations which Eleanor had not received or had declined, and it was some time before he awoke to the fact. Then it was too late, and he went the dreary round, hoping against hope and doing the best he could to seem agreeable to the girls who were there.

By the time he had attended the last of the dances in that set, he was ready to acknowledge his defeat, but he would not confess that he should ever do the slightest thing toward making up with Eleanor. His pride, he told himself, would not permit it.

He heard often of Eleanor; and some mischievous ones, remembering that he had been wont to devote himself to her, took the opportunity to plague him by repeating bits of gossip for his edification.

"We don't know for certain, of course," they said. "But we can't help hearing things, can we? And really, Mr. Stillwell is dreadfully fine-looking, isn't he?"

Aye, there was the rub! Mr. Stillwell was dreadfully fine-looking, and desperately nice! Gordon was really fierce in his despair, unaware of the friendly hand that was doing its best to make it all easier for him at the Court of Maitland.

Bertha kept her own counsel, but she often lay awake far into the night planning wild schemes that came to nothing, and almost despaired of winning happiness for herself by helping her lady. Eleanor had been ostentatiously scornful when she had heard that Gordon had come, after all, and openly rejoiced that she had been away from home.

"I can't understand Mr. Tracy's coming," she said haughtily. "After the note you took there. Are you quite certain you know the house? Number thirty-six, you know, with the high steps."

Certainly Bertha knew. Had she not often passed there on her way to church in the next block? Did not everybody know where the wealthy, charming Tracy family lived, anyhow? Eleanor gave her maid a quick look, but an innocent expression disarmed her suspicions, and she broke through her usual reserve.

"Mr. Tracy comes of a very old family," she said dreamily. "A family of gentlemen from the very earliest days."

"That's what we've often said downstairs," Bertha said casually. "Asking you to excuse us for talking. Of course, we can't help noticing them that come here, and we've often remarked Mr. Tracy for the gentlemanishness of him, miss. He never forgets to say good evening, and he ain't afraid we'll think he's one of us if he raises his hat to us of a Thursday afternoon in the street, miss."

Eleanor toyed idly with a silver shoe horn on the dressing table, and something in the droop of her shoulders gave her maid courage to continue.

"Mr. Tracy's got a taste in dress, too," she said. "He wears clothes as if he was born in 'em. There's most of the young gentlemen you see that acts like they was advertising some store, and was strutting particular swell to make you notice that them shoes cost at least five dollars, but him it's different with. You really don't see what he's got on, and yet all the time there's an awful lot of class to what he wears."

"It's the way we ought all of us to dress, I suppose," Eleanor said slowly. "Not only men. They tell me Mr. Tracy is as popular in society as he is with the maids."

Bertha grinned behind the gown she was shaking out, the picture of deference a moment later.

"We hear a lot from Herman," she said apologetically. "He gets to talk with other shoffers, and them as do

say—but law! I oughtn't to talk already."

An encouraging silence urged her on. "I could say this, though, ma'am," she said. "Mr. Tracy goes to just about everything that's going, and he's awful nice to the ladies. There's some talk of his being engaged to a little sawed-off young lady on his street."

"Nonsense!" Eleanor said quickly. "That is, of course you should not repeat those things. Miss Carpenter hasn't been in town a week. And, anyhow— Remember I do not like gossip."

"Very well, ma'am," Bertha said meekly. "I ask your pardon, miss, I'm sure."

"That's all right," Eleanor said more gently. "Will you please call Mr. Stillwell's number, and say I shall be ready at ten if he will call for me? He asked me to let him know the hour, as I could not be sure when I should be home from the Spencer dinner."

Bertha knew Mr. Stillwell's number well, but that was not the one she called when she was alone. As soon as her mistress had rustled downstairs, she cautiously closed the bedroom door, and called the number that she had to find first in the directory. The gentleman was not at home, but his mother took the message, and Bertha was content with the substitute. The man himself might have asked questions, the mother was too accustomed to her son's social engagements to be more than matter of fact and painstakingly accurate.

Bertha, unaccustomed to duplicity, was a little uneasy in her inmost self, but the success of her part of the venture was sure. Brought face to face, what could keep up the misunderstanding any longer?

Had not the seer declared that her own happiness would be secured by the meddling which she might do in the affairs of others? Though her own future was obscured by a mist of uncertainty, she was sufficiently absorbed in that of others to keep her faith in the seer. That she might have selected the wrong lovers to assist never entered

her head. Lovers were lovers, and it was not to be supposed that love could go unreciprocated when offered by a knight like Gordon Tracy.

CHAPTER III.

Gordon was crossing the avenue when he caught a glimpse of Eleanor in the auto with a party of friends, and he stopped motionless. His first impulse was to wave a friendly hat and arrest their progress, but the cool bow with which Eleanor received his hail made him regret having had the temerity, and he quickened his pace toward the park from which he had just come. Feeling a little left out in the scheme of things, he sank down on a bench near the pond, and brooded despondently over the past and present. The future was too dark to venture on.

Something in his attitude, or the gloom and misfortune often suggested by a well-dressed man on a park bench, drew the attention of a little old lady seated near, who spoke to him timidly, her slender fingers touching his coat sleeve.

"You don't appear to be worried 'bout work," she said, "this being Saturday afternoon. But would you mind telling me what is wrong with you?"

Tracy flushed and laughed, embarrassed.

"Thank you very much," he said formally. "It isn't exactly a matter to be discussed. I'm tired, I fancy. It's tiring weather."

The little old lady sighed, and then chuckled oddly.

"That's the way it's always happened," she said. "All my life I've wanted people to confide in me, and they always make some such reply as that. In storybooks, you know, a personage with as many wrinkles as I would know all the heart secrets of every young thing that crossed her path. It would be so interesting."

Gordon turned to look at her with a new interest. She was a winsome little somebody whose corkscrew curls revived a childhood memory that was very dear to him.

"As soon as I saw you, I said to myself: 'In the spring a young man's fancy,' and I wondered if things were not progressing well with you," she went on. "Then I thought I'd try again for a confidence—and failed. The truth is the present generation is silent regarding its loves and beliefs, and, being so, loses much of the joy of it. We used to talk things over when we were young."

"We do it still at sixteen." Gordon smiled. "But after we have been laughed at a bit, we keep our feelings to ourselves."

"We did not laugh," the little old lady said wistfully. "It was too beautiful for laughter, oftentimes too sorrowful for tears. The wind is cold here, I must go on. But remember, young man, remember, even if Phillida flouts you, it is a faint heart that never wins a fair lady. I bid you good day, sir."

Gordon rose, with his hat in his hand, and watched her go down the path to the avenue, a quaint little gray figure that expressed sweetness in its every motion. Under a great cottonwood tree, two children seized her hands, and drew her, laughing, out of his sight, a link between the past and the present. For a moment he stood looking after her, and then he turned away slowly toward home. The old lady was right, faint heart never won anything, but what was one to do? How could one enter where doors were kept systematically closed—slammed shut?

Some friends spied him as he neared the boulevard on his way home, and nothing must do but that he must clamber into their car and whirl away in the spring breezes and a whirlwind of harmless gossip and small talk. He would have greatly preferred being left to his own thoughts and devices, but the gloom lifted a bit with their help, and by the time he was set down at his own door, they and the little old lady had shown him a little sunshine, and helped him to a new resolve.

His mother called him as he passed the library on his way to his own room.

"Miss Maitland's maid telephoned a little while ago," she said. "She asked me to tell you that Miss Maitland would be ready at ten if you will call for her. I don't pretend to keep up with all your comings and goings, Gordon, but I thought you were going with your sister and Mr. Dunne."

Gordon stopped short, the quick color rising in his brown cheeks. Eleanor wanted him to take her to the Winship ball! Weeks ago he had asked to, and she had refused. Could seeing him that afternoon have made her sorry? Was there any understanding the vagaries of girls?

"I was," he answered, dazed. "But I imagine Dunne won't mind having Dot to himself. At ten, you said? Did—did she say anything else?"

"No, of course not, it was only the maid. Hurry, Gordon; we have been waiting dinner for you."

Humming a gay little tune and smiling inconsequently to himself in the mirror, Gordon made a careful toilet, and went down to dinner, leaving his room in a beautiful disorder indicative of an uncertainty regarding white ties and the proper collar. At dinner his gayety provoked the mirth of his fun-loving sister, but her teasing did not plague him or hurt. Was not Eleanor relenting, was she not mindful of his asking her for this very ball? Let others talk as they pleased, his heart was singing a gay little song without words, his sky was bright with a joyous light.

It was with a truly boyish step that he ran up on the Maitland porch a few minutes before ten that evening. As he rang the bell, he began to feel a little nervous trepidation as he wondered how she would receive him. Would she be so gracious that he might take his heart in his hand, and tell her?

The door was opened by Eleanor herself, but before he realized that it was she, he had stepped into the hallway under the ceiling's droplight.

"Why—Mr. Tracy!" Eleanor gasped. "Why have you come? I am going out with Mr. Stillwell. He is late, and—here you are."

In her crimson cloak she was a charming picture, and Gordon was so glad to hear her voice that he did not at first realize anything save that she was there. Then a little impatient movement from her brought him the bitter knowledge that he was not expected.

"I came because I was telephoned for," he said, bewildered. "You asked me to call for you at ten, and I was only too delighted. I hoped I might at last——"

It was her turn to be annoyed.

"Telephoned for you?" she repeated, amazed. "Indeed, I did nothing of the sort. I promised to go with some one else, and left only the hour uncertain. My maid telephoned him the hour."

"He hasn't come!" Gordon cried hopefully. "Won't you let me take his place? Oh, please, please! He'd have been here by this time if he had been coming."

As usual, he struck the wrong note, and, knowing it at once, made a bad matter worse by a hot protest.

"I can't see what enjoyment you get out of treating me this way!" he cried. "You send for me, and then won't give me a glance. It isn't like you, and I don't intend to stand for it. You know Stillwell won't come; something has detained him, it's so late."

At the very moment of his sore disappointment he had a ridiculous remembrance of a picture of a horse trying to reach a mouthful of hay on the end of a long pole sticking out from his head, and he compared himself bitterly to the always-tantalized crea-

ture. Now, Eleanor was provoked afresh, and there was no undoing the wrong he had unwittingly done.

"Mr. Stillwell will be here presently," Eleanor said magnificently. "He never fails to keep his word. Kindly excuse me, Mr. Tracy."

If Gordon had realized how absurdly Eleanor's manner resembled that of a tragedy queen, he might have taken some comfort in seeing her rustle away. As it was, his misery had crushed his sense of humor temporarily, and it was a sore-hearted young man who closed the door quietly after him, and dragged his slow, heavy feet to the waiting car. At first he thought only of going home, but then he remembered Dot and the dances he had promised to give her friends, and he reluctantly changed the order and kept his word.

Bertha was folding discarded garments when Eleanor hurried upstairs to speak to her. A guilty conscience or something in her lady's step caused her to slip as far into the closet as her plump person allowed, but not so far as to hide herself completely from her lady's bright eyes. Evidently she had failed again.

"Bertha!" Eleanor cried breathlessly. "What number did you call for me to-day? Quick!"



What her French imagination could not supply her German patience brought to light.

Bertha thought rapidly, and turned her quiet, innocent face to her young lady.

"Milton four-sixty-two," she said. "That was it. I hope nobody's dead or burned out, miss?"

"No, no! Milton four-sixty-two is Miss Forsyth's. I meant to ask you if you called Mr. Tracy instead of Mr. Stillwell. Answer me!"

"Why, sure I called Mr. Tracy, miss. Wasn't it him you said to call? We was talking about how nice he is, if I remember correct, Miss Eleanor. Was it that I got mixed at all yet, ma'am?"

Eleanor sank into a chair, her face a study in changing emotions.

"You certainly did, Bertha," she answered, with a little choked laugh. "Please hurry, and call Mr. Stillwell. I practically sent him away, and I know he'll never come back. I owe him an apology, and can't give it because——"

Eleanor's pronouns were ambiguous, but Bertha winked at the transmitter as she awaited Mr. Stillwell's eager acceptance of her lady's message.

CHAPTER IV.

Bertha was one of the maids who looked on at that ball, if being in waiting in the dressing room may be so described. Some were envious of their ladies' opportunities, some openly congratulated themselves that they did not have to work as hard as their mistresses on so warm an evening, and others gave absolutely no thought to anything above or beyond their own personal concerns as aired in their conversations in the dressing rooms.

Bertha did not make friends easily, and looked with deep scorn on the pleasantries of her whilom companions. Her maidship she took seriously, and since her visit to the sear there was little her mind considered, save the way in which she might further aid Gordon Tracy, and thus bring about her own good fortune and a future of happiness. She recognized, even as she pretended to be engrossed

in her novel, that the festive evening presented an opportunity not to be overlooked, and she cudged her brains to see the way to take advantage of it. She would have failed to do so had it not been for a chance remark she overheard.

"It's turning to a fierce night," one of the cloak women said to another. "It's blowin' and sleetin' something awful. I was to the corner for a breath o' air, and like to froze. It come awful sudden like, but that's the way with these here early spring days. The worst of it is, there's a lot o' folks depending on taxis, and they tells me there ain't none left in the garages. They're being picked up soon's they gets free, so it'll be day before any gets here."

Bertha closed her book, and laid her plans. Waiting until she saw the first few guests leaving, she slipped down to the carriage door, and hunted through the sleet for a car from the Stillwell garage. It had just drawn up to the curb, and she knew it well enough to recognize the very lamps. She hurried up to speak to the chauffeur. He was tired, and it was a matter of only a moment's conversation to make him understand what he was only too glad to hear. Bertha ran back to shelter, and from the steps saw the black automobile disappear in the storm and slush, well satisfied with its going.

Stopping a moment to chat with a chauffeur, she imparted the information regarding the scarcity of taxicabs, adding that Mr. Stillwell's man had gone home, some one having told him his master would go to the home of a friend. A little good-natured chaffing made the statement seem less important, and Bertha returned to her post, breathless, and wind-tossed, and damp.

She was so sure of what would follow that she had even the words with which Mr. Tracy would offer his assistance, and knew exactly the smile with which Miss Eleanor would receive the kindness, the first step toward reconciliation.

The ball continued late, so Dot Tracy was the first of the late ones to leave.

As she came down the stairs with Mr. Dunne, a friend touched her arm.

"I hope you came in your own car," she said. "It is a wild night, and they tell us the taxis and cabs are all out."

"Dear me!" Dot cried, all sympathy. "Whatever will the poor creatures do?"

"Either wait until they can get them or receive aid from the rest of us," the friend laughed. "I am taking four with me, but I keep hearing of others. My man tells me that Oliver Stillwell's chauffeur went home, and can't be reached and recalled by telephone. I wish some one would see to them."

"I'll look after that," Dot said impulsively. "Mr. Dunne, will you go up and tell Gordon to come with us or take Eleanor and Mr. Stillwell in his car? If they prefer, it may be best to let them have the car to themselves, as Gordon didn't bring any one."

Dunne hesitated.

"I'd counted on the trip home," he said ruefully. "I don't want Gordon. It's awfully hard to make me give it up. I had so much to say to you."

Dot colored.

"Perhaps you may have another chance," she said demurely. "If I promise you another opportunity, will you go tell Gordon?"

Gordon had just deposited his partner in her seat in the corner when he saw Dunne motioning wildly for him to join him.

"You will excuse me, please," he begged his partner. "Either Dunne is having a fit, or there is an earthquake on its way."

Dunne drew him into the smoking room without vouchsafing any explanation, completely mystifying him by his caution.

"There's the dickens to pay with the taxis," he began. "There's a fierce storm on, and they can't be had for love or money. Stillwell's man was taken sick or something, and everybody's doubling up."

"I don't exactly see the point," Tracy objected. "I don't feel specially inclined to double up with Stillwell, if that's what you mean. I have girls I promised Dot I'd dance with. I've got

to do my duty or not look her in the face again."

It was astonishing how brotherly he felt, and how his sense of duty increased the more he thought of taking Oliver Stillwell home.

"It was your sister that sent me," Dunne said triumphantly. "She suggests, no, urges, that you take Oliver and Miss Maitland in your car. It's the only decent thing to do. Otherwise they'll have to wait here till all hours in the morning."

"I don't care how long Stillwell waits," Gordon said crossly. "He never treats his office to a vision of himself, so there's no hurry."

"It's an awfully small thing to do. Take 'em with you, there's plenty room. Be generous."

"The dickens I will!" Gordon exclaimed. "Let Stillwell get a rig; he's her escort."

"Come, now, Tracy," Dunne pleaded. "Be a good sort. Miss Maitland's in our set, and we all know how quick she is to do anything for us. I'm sure you're the only person in the country that doesn't like her. Just tell her your car's at her service, that's all."

"Sounds easy enough," Tracy growled. "But I'll be hanged if I do."

"I thought you were better tempered than that," Dunne said frankly. "I call that rank selfishness. Anybody'd be willing to share a car with anybody else to-night. Have I got to go tell your sister you refuse?"

Gordon had a brilliant idea.

"I'll lend the car," he said, "if you'll take me home with you and Dot."

Dunne's face fell.

"All right," he said grumpily. "Come ahead."

"Thanks," Gordon laughed. "Anybody'd be glad to share a car with anybody else to-night. I'll join you in just a minute."

It was even harder than he had anticipated, but he kept his word. Eleanor was far from cordial when he appeared at her side; indeed, it seemed that she was only decently polite because she feared gossip.

"I'm sorry to bother you," Tracy,

said, in a low voice. "But Stillwell's man has gone and cannot be found; a taxi can't be secured anywhere, so something must be done. My sister has been talking with Mr. Stillwell, and he is willing to accept her offer if you are. I am going home with her in Dunne's car, and mine is at the service of you and Mr. Stillwell, if you will favor me by accepting it."

He did not do it very well, she thought, bungling it as he did so many things. Why did he put it off on his sister in that fashion? Didn't he care to do anything for her that he could avoid?

There was nothing to do but to accede to the arranged plan, so Gordon bowed himself hastily away, and occupied a corner of Dunne's car, moody, and silent, and a not enlivening companion. Not that his sister and Dunne cared particularly to have him say anything as long as they were together.

Gordon's chauffeur was inclined to grumble to himself at the change of route that necessitated his being out in the cold a half hour longer than he had expected to be, with the sleet-covered wind shield making progress slow and skidding constant. Even when a muffled figure climbed up beside him, he did not realize his blessings. It took a swaying electric light to show him that Miss Maitland's maid wasn't so bad, after all, and he essayed a conversation, secured in his assurance that the lady and gentleman incased in glass could not gather the remarks he let fall.

"Fierce, ain't it?" he began. "Sure you're plenty warm?"

People did not usually look after Bertha's well-being, and the novelty pleased her.

"Thank you, yes," she said timidly. "This here is a swell machine, ain't it?"

"Sure thing! I wish I dast to let it out for you, but it's too darn slippery," he said. "Besides, I don't guess those two folks want to hustle any to speak of."

Bertha shrugged one shoulder in its heavy wraps.

"You're off, there," she said calmly. "She gives his vi'lets and roses to me already."

The man laughed.

"My, you're a cute one!" he cried.

"Who'd 'a' thought you'd put things together like that, eh? And is there a feller whose vi'lets and roses you don't get any of? What?"

Bertha drew herself up.

"I ain't no gossip of a thing if I am a maid," she announced, with dignity. "I ain't going to say is there or ain't there. I ain't talking."

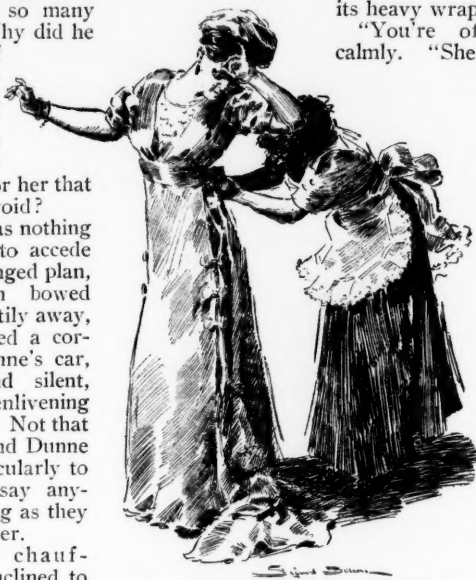
"Which means there is," the man laughed. "And is there a feller as sends you vi'lets and roses, say, a feller who's all right, all right?"

as thinks you're What?"

Bertha flashed scornful eyes up at him.

"That," she declared, "is my own business. The house is the dark-brown one with the light in front of it."

"I know the house well enough," the man said. "The maid as was here before you and me, we was friends, I tell you. You needn't to pretend you don't remember I been here in your day, neither. I got to turn, and back her



"There's some talk of his being engaged to a little saved-off young lady on his street."

'round a bit to make a first-class stop. I guess you been used to a cheap line of shoffers what ain't up on the latest. Or maybe they ain't got the best machine like this here. See there! Don't she stop swell? Scoot along, and open the front door, or you'll get wet. I'll help the folks out. So long! Hope I'll see you soon."

CHAPTER V.

If Bertha's ingenuity was not aided by delicacy of feeling, it was none the less praiseworthy in its aim. Though she at times forced situations, and judged the upper class by what she knew of her own, her perseverance and industry merited success, irrespective of motive. Once in a while she grew discouraged at her failures or her miscalculations, but it never entered her busy brain to give up, in the face of the seer's prophecy that her happiness lay in that direction.

Miss Maitland was ill for a whole week after the storm, and then Bertha shone. Many callers there were, of course, and the telephone rang constantly, but the fact that Gordon Tracy did not make inquiries was not known in the Maitland household. The messages that Bertha constructed were models of formal kindness, but now and then a curious expression brought an odd frown to Eleanor's aching forehead.

Uncertain in what she had offended, Bertha had frequent recourse to the silent discretion of a plain calling card. Eleanor Maitland had no way of knowing that the same card, unearthed after much searching, did duty every time.

Oliver Stillwell sent flowers every day, and here Bertha was at a loss to know what to do. Gordon Tracy sent nothing, and she could not make up for the lack of attention. Once a wild idea came into her head that she might take half of the four dozen long-stemmed roses that came on Saturday, and put Gordon Tracy's card that had already done such yeoman service with it, for her notice, but she dismissed the idea

on noting the reception accorded the blossoms.

Eleanor Maitland seemed tired of receiving flowers, and showed it by sending them away as soon as they were taken from their wrappings with the cards. The parlors were heavy with their perfume, and the maids' rooms were like a conservatory with day-old blooms.

Bertha profited with the others, but more frequently, and wore on her afternoons out flowers that were worth their literal weight in gold. She would have been desperately appalled had she realized that one blossom was not to be purchased for half her week's wage.

With the suddenness of temporarily invalidated youth, Eleanor Maitland recovered from her cold in time to accept an invitation for a late spring dance, probably the last affair of importance that season. In a private house of not large dimensions, it was a select gathering both above and below stairs. There was no preparation made for maids outside the dressing rooms, and Bertha found herself suffering from the closeness and heat as the dance went on.

Eleanor Maitland, coming in from a delicious waltz to tuck up a straggling lock, noticed her little maid's tired white face, and was full of sympathy in a moment.

"You poor little woman!" she said gently. "How thoughtless of me to keep you here! Really, I shall not need you again, as it is far too warm for many more dances, so run on downstairs, and tell Herman to take you home, and come back for me later."

Bertha was grateful.

"It's certain kind of you, ma'am," she said. "I have such a headache as never was yet."

"Well, you run along," Eleanor said gay. "Drive about a bit till you feel better. Leave me those thinner gloves, please; these kids are so heavy."

Laden with her lady's gloves, Bertha went gladly down the stairway to look for Herman. He was hard to find in the long line of chauffeurs, collecting on the coping for a chat before making

the homeward trip, but while she looked she found a friend just driving up.

"Hello!" his genial voice hailed her from the front of a shining car. "Where you bound to-night?"

It was Mr. Tracy's chauffeur, and Bertha was glad.

"I'm excused already," she said. "I'm looking for Herman to go home with a headache."

The man consulted the little clock before him.

"Don't go home with a headache," he said sympathetically. "Go home with me. I'm a good half hour early, and I'll be glad of the job."

"I'd ought to wait for Herman," Bertha said wearily. "Miss Eleanor said I should. I wisht he'd come."

"He's got a puncture, like's not," the man urged. "I'll see you home safe if you don't mind. Of course if you want to ditch me you can."

Bertha, weary and suffering, was not in a mind to argue, so in a moment she stepped lightly up beside him, and was whirled away. Glad of an opportunity to "let her out," the man speeded the machine for Bertha's edification, choosing side streets where police were few, and making the journey as long as possible by various detours.

The delicious excitement and the cool air were very welcome, so Bertha gave herself up to the enjoyment of the trip and her new friend's conversation. As a result, her headache was gone by the time the house was reached, and her brain was its usual alert self again.

"I wish you had a situation farther off," he said, as he helped her out. "This here ride has been something like, and I wouldn't mind if I was going to have longer drives with you."

"Well, you're not," Bertha said calmly. "I got something else to do besides go riding around this here town with a feller as don't know the streets no better than to take me a mile out of the way when I'm in an awful rush."

She was gone as quick as a flash, like a modern Cinderella with one difference. Instead of leaving behind her a tiny glass slipper, she dropped, with

malice aforethought, on the floor of the car, a pair of long white kid gloves that were not her own. She fell asleep that night, assured that she had at last found the means of bringing about the much-desired reconciliation.

So it happened that Gordon Tracy, handing a little lady into the auto, picked up the gloves, and thrust them into his pocket.

"My sister drops things everywhere," he said, with a laugh. "I tell her she ought to have a little darky page for no other reason than that she needs to be picked up after so often."

Home in his room, however, he took them from his pocket, and laid them across his chiffonier with something more nearly a groan than anything with which he would have favored his sister's gloves. In picking them up, he had seen the little monogram in blue embroidered on the long wrists, and known them as hers.

How did they get there? She had treated him so distantly all the evening that he had not dared ask for a single dance, and yet here were her unmistakable gloves. How did they get in his machine, and why?

He felt as if he were a character in Dumas or the victim of a mystery-story plot. Wasn't it enough that she should act as though she hated him without his worrying over her gloves? If it were any one else but Eleanor Maitland, he might hope the gloves were dropped there for a peace signal, but Eleanor's dignity was too real, her true feeling too unmistakable. Possibly she had dropped them, and some one in passing had tossed them into his car as the first place that offered.

That was the solution undoubtedly, but it did not add to his peace of mind. Sitting in the wide morris chair, Gordon Tracy gazed at the long, slender, white gloves unseeingly for hours. Around them and their gentle perfume he built, in such dreams as might have been, the happy castles that could not be. If Eleanor ever relented—if she could have cared for him—if Stillwell would only do something to disgrace himself—if, only if—

The cold dawn warned him that, after all, he was only dreaming, and he went to bed with a bitter pain at his heart that refused to be dulled.

The next morning Bertha was standing at the great roofed-over side entrance talking to Herman, who was sleepy and inclined to be cross, when an automobile drew up to the curb, and a man came through the gate to where she stood. Even before he raised his cap she knew him.

"Hello, Weber, old pal!" Herman cried. "What's bringing you to these parts, eh?"

The younger man glanced at Bertha, and laughed.

"How's the head to-day?" he asked. "If I hadn't 'a' known the shortest way, you'd be looking a heap worse nor you do."

"Thanks. I wouldn't be so chipper and sassy as seems to be the fashion," Bertha said, with dignity. "What you got there for me?"

The man shook his head.

"Not for you this time," he said. "Neither roses nor v'lets have I got a smell of this day. This here's a pair of gloves I was told to leave here. Judgin' by the size of 'em, they's a mite large for a slip of a body like yourself."

Bertha's disappointment was keen.

"Are you meaning to tell me," she asked, "that Mr. Tracy sent them gloves home by you?"

"Sure!" the man declared easily. "He knew by the look o' me that I could be trusted with gloves what don't fit me."

Bertha paused long enough in the doorway to fire a shot before slipping away.

"Honest some men may be, I ain't sure," she said crushingly. "But so awful stupid they ain't got sense enough to snap up nothing when it's offered to 'em on a stick already."

CHAPTER VI.

The next house to the one the Maitlands owned was the home of a school friend of Eleanor's, Loretta Harris. She had been abroad for a year or

more, and her return that spring had occurred just before the annual migration to the summer resorts. Although it was already warm, Mrs. Harris planned a surprise dinner for her, and Eleanor was one of those invited and sworn to secrecy.

So it happened that, though the two girls saw each other constantly during the forty-eight hours that intervened between the return and the celebration, there was no mention made of the probable guests. They had much to talk over, of course, but Loretta did most of the talking, since her experiences had been most thrilling and unusual. Gossip had made her the fiancée of many a titled foreigner, but Eleanor was delighted to find she had remained true to America, in spite of all temptations to the contrary.

"There's a something about the American man that grips you the way the flag does," Loretta said dreamily. "They're blunt maybe, but they're so honest and big."

"It sounds as though you had some very particular man in mind," laughed Eleanor. "Don't look scared, I'm not going to catechize you. I'm just not going to admire your good sense as much as I did. Nobody would marry a foreign nobleman if she had left her heart in the good old States. Where are you going this summer?"

The evening of the dinner was splendidly moonlit, and Bertha, her labors over for a time, slipped out on the servants' porch to gaze at the silvery light that always gave her such delicious pangs of loneliness and concentrated sentiment. Her young lady, looking a picture of loveliness, had gone, and Bertha's imagination was following her into the brightly lighted rooms when some one whispered from over the brick wall. It was Nora, the Harris cook.

"Come over and look at the table," she called. "Be quick with yez! It's near time, and this here caterer man is fair driving me crazy."

Bertha was quick, and it was not more than a minute before she stood, dazed and delighted, by the gorgeous

table with its wondrous array of glass and silver. A centerpiece of the tiny flags of all nations, surmounted by the Stars and Stripes, especially delighted her.

"It's like fairyland already," she whispered, fearful of being heard by the laughing company in the adjoining rooms. "It is sure grand."

Growing bolder, she moved about the table reading the cards, curious to know who would be there.

"Who's this Watkins they've put next Miss Eleanor?" she asked jealously. "I ain't never heard of him yet."

"He's an Englishman," Nora whispered back. "Don't talk so loud; they'll be after hearin' yez."

Bertha paid no heed, for she had discovered Gordon's name next to the hostess, and a sudden idea came to her. She grabbed Nora's arm.

"Say, is they going to be sorted out first?" she asked eagerly. "Or does they sort themselves when they get in?"

"They waits till they gets in, and fol-lers them cards," Nora said good-naturedly. "I heard Mrs. Harris say so. Quick! Here they come!"

Nora fled, but Bertha loitered a moment, reaching the kitchen later, somewhat out of breath and very pink-cheeked. She had just escaped discovery.

Mrs. Harris was a model hostess, but she elevated her brows a trifle as her guests seated themselves. When one places dinner cards oneself, after a sleepless night of planning and drawing endless diagrams, there is no one to blame with mistakes, especially when one is not blessed with a broad-shouldered husband. It certainly looked pointed to put the self-assertive Englishman in the seat of honor, and she was shrewd enough to know that he was willing to accept the attention. He might be slow on occasion when he was expected to be quick, but when slowness was desirable he was well aware of fortune's kindness. It was just too bad.

Eleanor Maitland's pulse beat rapidly with what she was pleased to call

anger, but her quiet manner was far from showing how desperately she longed to rise and leave the room. Of course, Loretta was not to blame, but Mrs. Harris ought to have known that a girl does not like to be thrown constantly with a man whose name gossip associates with her own.

At first she was tempted not to talk to him at all, and then she realized that that would not do. She did not want to have it known that they were really not on speaking terms; it sounded so foolish. She racked her brains for something to say, acutely conscious that there was an amused smile in Gordon's eye, in spite of his suspense. After discarding such topics as the opera, golf, and the weather, she launched her conversational craft appropriately.

"I suppose you are grieving over the defeat of your crew," she said boldly. "It wasn't fair, was it?"

"We were not defeated," he corrected her politely. "My college won the race by two lengths."

She knew better the moment she spoke, but would not retreat.

"Oh, did it?" she asked coldly. "How nice! But there was some unfairness, wasn't there?"

He reddened.

"There was talk of it by the defeated crews," he said shortly. "But it was proven to the satisfaction of everybody that we had done nothing that was not strictly honorable."

He gave her an odd glance, and it was her turn to color. It was Oliver Stillwell that had accused the others of unfairness, and evidently Gordon guessed it. She had not known whose college was accused, and was provoked with herself for seeming mean. What must he think of her for deliberately bringing up an uncomfortable subject? Uncertain what to say, she fell into brisk converse with her neighbor on the other side. When she turned back, Gordon was laughing at the remarks of Louise Todd.

"Louise was telling me about a vegetable man they once patronized," Gordon explained courteously. "His wife



Provoked with herself for seeming stupid, Eleanor devoted her attention to the other neighbor for the rest of the dinner.

used to tie him to the bedpost when he had been drinking. One day the house caught fire, and the firemen were about to dash in and rescue the old man, when she came running up, shouting: "Don't go in! Don't go in! I got all my money on me!"

He was so self-contained, so easy in his manner, that Eleanor could think of nothing else than the marvel of his self-possession. Something was required of her, however, and she made a miserable effort.

"How dreadful!" she cried. "Did they save him?"

Gordon laughed.

"I didn't ask," he said. "My sympathy was not awakened as long as I knew the money was safe."

Provoked with herself for seeming

stupid, Eleanor devoted her attention to the other neighbor for the rest of the dinner. Gordon lapsed into silence, rousing now and then when Louise asked him a question, or his sister, Dot, glanced his way inquiringly. It was plain to be seen that Eleanor was mightily provoked at having to sit next to him, and the knowledge did not add in the least to his comfort. He had had a radiant moment of hoping that Eleanor had hinted to have him placed there, but it had not taken long to undeceive himself.

The only pleasure he had was a selfish one, for he was glad through and through that Oliver Stillwell was not invited, and he was. Small cheer that, when, no matter how nice he tried to be, she was cold, and distant, and

absent-minded. What could a man do to win a girl like Eleanor? He could not give her up as long as there was a fighting chance, as long as she was not avowedly in love with that confoundedly nice fellow, Oliver Stillwell.

A little later while the others waited for the autos to take their turn at the door, Eleanor had a word with Loretta alone.

"How could you!" she cried desperately. "Why did you give me that man?"

Loretta looked at her, astonished.

"We didn't," she said. "That's the funny part of it. Mother put the cards on, and she put him where I could talk to him easily. How they— Oh, good night, Mr. Dunne. Why do you care, anyhow?"

"Why, it looks, it looks——" Eleanor stammered. "Well, anyway, everybody'll think I asked for it."

"Oh, nonsense!" Loretta cried practically. "Don't let that worry you. Why, he didn't give you more than a glance, did he? If it were that Mr. Parker, it would be different. I wouldn't worry, honey. Good night, Sam. I'll see you to-morrow night, won't I?"

Eleanor slipped away without further remark, and her maid met her at the bedroom door, not at all her usual sleepy self. Eleanor wondered idly why Bertha was so wide awake, but it did not enter her own weary head to imagine such a thing as a chauffeur arriving an hour or so too early, and being obliged to rest a bit on the Maitland servants' porch. She was too busy telling herself she wished she had not gone to the dinner.

If she had not, she would not have seen him again or known that it was Gordon Tracy that had kept Loretta heart-whole for over a year. Was it not so well understood that Mrs. Harris had placed him beside her as a matter of course, confessedly in order that Loretta might have a little visit with him? Oh, well, what difference did it all make? So, girllike, she turned over, and wept into the soft heart of her pillow.

CHAPTER VII.

Farview Bay was gay with summer gowns when Mrs. Maitland opened her cottage there. The scene from the wooded bluff overlooking the water was wonderfully beautiful, and the quiet was very welcome to Eleanor.

At first the attempts that were made to draw her into the social pleasures of the colony met with no success, for she was tired and listless, but when Oliver Stillwell put up at the hotel she awoke to an interest in the plans of the young people.

The usual round of summer gayeties served to pass the time away, and occasionally Eleanor seemed to enjoy it as much as any one. It was Bertha alone who knew anything to the contrary, and she was merely suspicious of trouble because her young lady's eyes were sometimes red. With characteristic methods, Bertha probed for the truth.

"When I looks at these here young men having such a good time, I feel sorry for them as is left behind," she said, with a sympathetic sigh. "I had a card from Nora already, and she says Mr. Harris is fair sick from the heat."

"It won't be for long," Eleanor said cheerfully. "They are all going to the mountains in August."

"I don't suppose they gets much business done," Bertha said anxiously. "Though I do hear Mr. Tracy fair surprises 'em with his hustle. It certainly is hard on the shuffers and such, not to never have a vacation already."

Eleanor thought she saw something.

"Is your friend a chauffeur?" she asked. "And does he mind the heat?"

Bertha's color rose.

"It's something fierce, ma'am," she said, troubled. "He's on the jump all day, and land only knows if he'll ever get a day off."

"Maybe he'd like it down here," Eleanor said kindly. "He could get a room in town for very little. The blue dress, please."

"I'm fearful lest he couldn't get off," Bertha said, shaking her head. "His gentleman needs him so."

Eleanor laughed.

"Let his gentleman come, too," she said, highly amused. "I'm sure I'd be pleased. Have you any idea where I put that pendant with the amethyst?"

"I get lots of post cards," Bertha said proudly. "Some of them's so swell I'm right glad to have swell ones to fire back. You can get a whole pile on a post card yet, and sometimes it's awful interesting. Only yesterday I was hearing how Mr. Tracy's engaged, as I'd heard before once, and then they say he's going to the old country for two years, miss. I wisht I was him."

Eleanor's fingers faltered as she fastened a chain.

"Going away?" she asked. "Oh, I don't think so."

"Oh, yes, miss," Bertha said cheerfully. "The tickets is bought, they're telling me, for September, miss. Two years is a long time, ain't it, miss? So much might happen to folks already."

That evening Bertha looked over her stock of souvenir postals for one which, irrespective of pictured scene, gave most space for correspondence. Her sense of the proprieties forbade her inditing a letter, no matter how brief, to any masculine acquaintance, but permitted postals, no matter how long the message she was able to make them carry. One with a clear back, save for a coquettish yacht scene in the corner, filled the requirements exactly, and she bent her energies to the task of saying much in a few words of her large, straggling handwriting. Completed, the effusion ran:

FRIEND CARL: Hope all well with you goes. It is not so here; far from it. My lady cries nights. It is stupid here already. She would see Him, could she. She is caring a lot. It is all a Foolishness. Now you do something. Get him Here. See? P. S.—There is a footmen's and shuffers ball here the Twenty-thurd. Reggards all-ready to the gurls. Respectfully, BERTHA.

Carl studied over the postal for a long puzzled time, and then he made up that deliberate mind that he never unmade. He should attend the ball of the twenty-third.

On their way to a dinner he brought up the subject in what he considered a

most diplomatic and tactful fashion. Dot and Mr. Dunne were inside the auto for cozy privacy, Gordon outside for fresh air and a cigar, and it was an excellent opportunity, especially as Gordon was in a talkative mood. Gordon opened the conversation.

"On a night like this one ought to be in the woods," he said dreamily. "It's a crime to stay in the city."

"That's what I'm thinking," Carl said ruefully. "Only I got more reason to feel it. I got a girl out at Farview, and I'm that scared I'll lose her I'm like to fret myself thin. There's a lot of fine fellers out there, they tells me."

"Hard luck, Carl!" Gordon laughed sympathetically. "I suppose you want a vacation. Is that it?"

Carl hesitated. The conversation was not taking the turn he had hoped it would, for evidently Mr. Tracy was not going to let fall any hint of troubles of his own. Perhaps Bertha was mistaken. At any rate, it behooved him to stop carefully.

"I ain't thought about it yet, sir," he said, sparring for time. "But it sort o' worries me. The only comforting thing about it is that she ain't right well pleased with the place, which of course she would be if she did like any of the fellers there. You see, I guess as how it's her lady as makes her awful blue, she that cries night and day for trouble over something."

"Cries?" Gordon laughed idly. "Now, how romantic!"

"Yes, sir, cries, and ain't got no heart for nothing," Carl went on, with enthusiasm. "Seems like she's got a feller somewheres else or something, and all went crooked like. She wants awful to see him."

"She makes a confidante of her maid, eh?"

"Does what, sir, excuse me?"

"Tells her maid everything?"

"Oh, no, sir," Carl said hastily. "Bertha just guesses it. Stands to reason, don't it, sir, that a lady likes somebody else when she's got all the fellers she can tackle, and yet ain't happy, already?"

"It certainly looks that way."



"Do you suppose you could get me that pond lily if you tried?"

"It looks to me like girls is like automobiles," Carl said wisely. "If you ain't Johnny-on-the-spot, with your hand on the wheel and your eyes on where you're going, she's likely to skid, and first thing you know you've got a smash-up. I ain't ashamed to say I'm awful stuck on Bertha, and it's mostly her I'm thinking on when I says that, and not meaning no disrespect to Miss Maitland."

The auto stopped, and Carl sprang out to open the door, but Gordon did not stir until his man came back.

"Whose maid did you say Bertha is?" he asked carelessly. "I did not catch the name."

"Miss Maitland, sir," Carl repeated respectfully. "The lady as you lent

the car to a while back when I first seen Bertha."

"Oh, yes, certainly," Gordon answered, as he hurried after his sister. "Call back at eleven, Carl."

Carl made no audible reply, but relieved his mind by a whispered: "Good job, old man! What'll you bet on getting to Farview in a rush?"

Gordon never knew exactly how he got through that dinner. All he remembered of it afterward was that there was a girl opposite him who giggled, and cast down her eyes, and made him cross with people in general. His mind was in a whirl, and he could not make it stay still long enough to know what to think. He had listened to servants' gossip, which, even when dis-

counted for exaggeration, might have a grain of truth in it, and, listening, his impulse was to go to Farview at the earliest possible moment. And yet when he came to think it out, he could not bear to run the risk of making himself ridiculous in her eyes.

Suppose it was only gossip, and she was well content, possibly engaged, as he had heard often enough, how small he would feel appearing on the scene as the disconsolate cavalier! What on earth could he do? Achieving the feat of bringing his common sense to bear on the situation, as he expressed it, he calmly decided he was a very foolish man, and the most rational thing for him to do was to remain at home, and get rested for his projected European jaunt in the fall. The giggling girl asked him about it with surprising suddenness.

"I am not certain what I shall do," he told her abruptly. "I may go in October if I can get a booking. I'd like to have somebody with me; it's so lonesome going alone."

He was provoked with the giggler for giving a sentimental turn to his commonplace reply, and he lapsed into a silence as complete as possible in such an assembly. His resolve was taken. He should sail as soon as he could get passage.

Nevertheless, after a silent drive home, he paused to give an order to Carl before going in, an order that was exactly contrary to his resolution.

"After you have set Mr. Dunne down," he said, "I wish you'd go to the telegraph office, and wire for rooms at the Farview Hotel. It is getting too hot for comfort here. I think we'll motor over to-morrow or next day, if we can arrange it."

CHAPTER VIII.

The yacht race had lacked interest, so light had been the wind, so easy the victory, and Eleanor leaned back against her cushions in the canoe with something very like a sigh of weariness. She had been there too short a time to have the place pall on her, and

yet she would be willing to leave it if she did not fear she would be selfish to take her mother away from a spot she so delighted in.

Sometimes she almost wished she were a little serving maid like Bertha, who openly rejoiced because a frankly public postal card announced the imminent presence of her gentleman friend. It was all such smooth sailing for people of simple ideas, whereas life for her was so complicated.

"A penny for your thoughts," Stillwell offered, resting his paddle on his knee as they floated into the quiet shade of a willow. "You look as though you had the burden of a world on your shoulders."

"I have, of my world," Eleanor answered, smiling. "I was in a brown study, I guess."

"I don't like them," Stillwell said soberly. "I always feel as though you were a long ways off from me when you have that absent look."

"If I were a long ways off, I'd be apt to look absent, wouldn't I?" she laughed. "Do you suppose you could get me that pond lily if you tried?"

"Yes, but I'm not going to," Stillwell answered moodily. "I have no desire to have my picture in the city papers to-morrow. Can't you see the headlines? 'Promising young lawyer drowned while carrying out a promise. O. T. Stillwell perishes for a girl's whim.' Isn't it awful?"

"Please don't. I don't like that sort of a joke," Eleanor pleaded. "Haden we better get into shallower water?"

Stillwell brightened.

"I don't want to," he said boldly. "I know I have wandered into pretty deep water, but I—I like it."

"Have you heard the plans for the dance to-night?" Eleanor asked, with enthusiasm. "The boathouse is to be all lighted up with colored electric lights, and the hop is to be upstairs. The view from the water will be beautiful, and the music will make it seem like fairyland. I'm divided in my mind as to whether I want to be out on the water with a crowd or to look in at the

window of the chauffeurs' ball over at the Casino."

Stillwell shook some water from the paddle.

"You promised me some dances," he said stoutly. "Are you going back on your word?"

"Oh, well, you won't mind," Eleanor said easily. "We'll get a boat that will hold six or eight, and have a lot of fun. Come, it's getting late, and we mustn't be late for tea. I do hope we have something good to eat, I'm so dreadfully hungry."

With a sigh, Stillwell obediently picked up his paddle. How could any one ever ask a girl to marry him when she persisted in being so sensible, and so apparently oblivious to anything he might be trying to say? When he had stowed away the canoe, he walked along by Eleanor's side, moody and silent, and it did not add in the least to his comfort that Eleanor was not in the slightest degree aware that he was silent.

The hop that night was the event of the season, aided in its effect by the gayly lighted flotilla that listened to the music and watched the reflected lights from outside.

Eleanor took a few turns early in the evening, and then she and Stillwell joined their friends in the longest boat they could find.

"It's just like a dream!" one of the girls cried. "The colored lights reflect like organ pipes, and the dancers look like fairies. I wish I could think of a wish. This is Midsummer's Eve, and we'd get everything we wished for. What's your wish, Mr. Grayson?"

"A financial one, too complicated to mention," laughed the young man. "If I had the funds, I'd go abroad."

"Tracy made you think of that," said another man. "He tells me he's going sure, if nothing happens to prevent."

"That's such an indefinite phrase," Stillwell said, with some impatience. "Of course, all our plans are made with that mental reservation."

"I thought he did not mean it indefinitely," the young man said, with a laugh. "It may be only my fancy, but

Miss Carpenter has been getting a lot of letters lately."

"Oh, the gossip of a summer resort!" cried the girl. "What's your wish, Miss Maitland?"

"You're spoiling the charm," said the other strange girl. "Wishes to have any power must be made silently to one's self. I've made mine. Now, you make yours, Miss Maitland, and then the rest of you."

The music wafted over the water made them all oddly silent, their thoughts turning involuntarily to quiet and serious things, to which the notion of wishing had irresistibly inclined them. The young men, resting on their oars, watched the "organ pipes" of color waving in the water, and the girls dreamed idly of other past or possibly future days of dances, and lights, and soft breezes.

It was all too perfect to spoil, but young Grayson was nervously restless, and never did have any compunctions about spoiling anything.

"Let's sing," he suggested. "Pipe up the 'Swanee River,' one of you fellows."

Eleanor was cross enough with him to have cheerfully acquiesced in his being cast out into the surrounding waters, but she said nothing. They were encircled and followed by other boats and canoes with will-o'-the-wisp lights, and voices carried too easily over the water for her to want to make what might sound to others like petulant remarks. So the sorrowful strains of the sweet old melody rang out over the water, and in a moment were caught up by strong, sweet voices far and near.

It amused Eleanor to note each voice as it swung in, but she was startled with what was almost fear, when a deep voice from a far-away canoe dominated the men. At first she thought it a trick of her imagination, for Gordon could not be there, especially not with a girl in a canoe, but after a moment's listening she knew she was right. Her wish had come true.

Bertha was not in her element that night. She was at last at a really story-

book ball, but shyness almost overcame her, and she did not enjoy being a wall-flower. The other girls present she found bold and forward, and she slipped out on the Casino balcony to be quiet and enjoy the band by herself. Here could she imagine a scene to suit her girlish dreams, and forget the loud laughing and rough manners of the men she did not know. Out there in the dimness Carl found her, after looking long for her.

"Come on in," he said gayly. "Ain't you promised me some dances already?"

"I never did, in my life," Bertha declared reprovingly. "I dassn't go back in there. I ran away from a feller that called me ma'am."

Carl laughed.

"You're a-going to dance with me," he said masterfully. "Come along. I done what you ast me, and brought him up here, so now it's my turn."

"Oh, he came!" Bertha gasped. "Oh, Carl, ain't it just great that he came?"

"I do' know about that," Carl declared. "I ain't raising no hullabaloo over his coming. The point with me is that I'm here."

Bertha went back to the dancing floor with him, and such is the sheeplike nature of man that she had no lack of partners from that time forth. Carl would have liked it better, perhaps, had it not been so, but he was nevertheless proud of her popularity, and proud to escort her back to the cottage shortly before the cool summer dawn. He was glad he had come, in the nick of time, apparently, judging by the devotion of the tall guy with the red hair.

Eleanor had been asleep some time when her maid slipped up to her own room under the roof, so it was late morning before Bertha had a chance to tell her about the ball.

"It was certainly grand, miss," she said earnestly. "There wasn't ever anything sweller, leastwise that I goes to, of course. Even my feller from town was here."

"So he came, did he?"

"He did, miss, and the swellest dancer, him. Nobody can't beat him,

I'll bet. He says as how Mr. Tracy is sweller, but I do' know, having never seen him, so to speak, dancing, miss."

"Does he know Mr. Tracy?"

Eleanor's voice was muffled by the hair Bertha was brushing over her face, but Bertha heard it.

"Know him, miss?" Bertha asked, in apparent astonishment. "Does he? Why, Mr. Tracy's his young gentleman, and he says there ain't a kinder man on the top of the globe. He hates to think of his getting married. Was I pulling your hair, miss?"

"No, no," Eleanor said hastily. "It's all right. Why does this friend of yours worry about Mr. Tracy?"

"Well, of course, I ain't no right to repeat things," Bertha said apologetically. "But, you see, people do talk a lot, and Carl has a kind of an idea that Mr. Tracy had reasons for coming here. Would you like it braided high or low this morning, Miss Eleanor?"

"I don't care. High, I guess," Eleanor said absently. "See that the sandwiches are made thin, will you, Bertha, please? The picnic is to be at seven, so there is plenty of time. I shall not need you for two hours."

CHAPTER IX.

Eleanor and her mother motored to a cliffside cottage for luncheon with friends, and then Eleanor came back to their own house to leave her mother, and pick up the baskets and Bertha. Mrs. Maitland insisted on Bertha's going because she did not like the idea of Eleanor's going out to the grounds alone, especially as it was, through Mrs. Maitland's fault in returning from the luncheon deliberately, too late for Eleanor to go with the rest of the party.

Oliver Stillwell had expected to go with her, but, meeting her accidentally, had changed his plans, and he had left for town.

On the way to the luncheon, Mrs. Maitland had stopped in the village to do an errand at the dry-goods store, the "Emporium," leaving Eleanor wait-

ing in the motor. Oliver Stillwell, sauntering by, had been only too glad to stop for a moment's conversation, which took an unexpected turn.

"I don't see how you girls can look so fresh and dainty the morning after keeping such late hours," he laughed. "We men come away from town for a rest, and go back more tired than when we came away. The ideal vacation is in the woods, where a hop is unknown except to grasshoppers."

Eleanor glanced at his white flannels, and laughed.

"I don't believe you know how to rusticate," she said. "You'd be perfectly miserable in the woods. Why don't you go to a quieter place than this?"

"It was your taste, not mine," he said, as one taking a plunge. "I never should have come here if I hadn't wanted to be with you."

"It takes mother a long time to buy ribbon," Eleanor said, a bit nervously. "Don't you want to ask her if she knows it is almost one o'clock?"

"No," he said, without stirring. "And I'm not going to be put off by pond lilies and mothers any longer. If you don't care for me, say so, and end this awful suspense. It is getting to be more than I can stand."

"I've done my best to show you," she said gently. "I'm awfully sorry, you've been so good, I——"

"It's all right," he interrupted. "Don't give it a thought. It's a staggerer for me, somehow, for, though I didn't really dream you would, I did hope you might. It hasn't been your fault, so don't worry, please."

He held out his hand, and she put hers into it with genuine sympathy, just as her mother came out of the "Emporium."

"Going away, Mr. Stillwell?" Mrs. Maitland asked, surprised. "Your vacation is short."

"I had intended to stay longer," Stillwell answered, with a ghost of a smile. "But things sometimes happen to prevent," and I am leaving on the three-six."

Mrs. Maitland was genuinely regretful.

"We shall miss you ever so much," she said, "and shall hope for your speedy return. If you are not able to come back later, we shall be glad to see you in town. In the meantime, we shall miss you. Good-by!"

They left him standing on the curb, his hat raised, and a rather wistful smile on his lips. Mrs. Maitland glanced at Eleanor, and, like a wise person, forbore to question her. It was not necessary.

So Eleanor appeared at the picnic with her maid bearing the excuse of Mr. Stillwell, who regretted being obliged to leave for the city. It was late enough when she reached there to have caused some anxiety regarding the sandwiches, so no comment was made on the early and sudden departure of an important member of the company.

Eleanor, glad to escape for the second time, fell to work at once, with the help of Bertha and two others soon making all ready for the supper. In spite of herself, she felt an odd sinking of the heart when she found that Gordon Tracy had not come. Was he not invited? She dared not ask, but awaited a mention of him in the gay, joking conversation that flew past her. She did not have long to wait.

"This won't be a complete affair unless some one will be kind enough to sit on the lemon pie!" cried one. "The joke papers always insist on it."

"First catch your pie," said Miss Winthrop. "We haven't one of any sort or description. I don't think we'll any of us have the courage to look a pie in the face after we leave this place. I get so tired of peach, apple, and custard pies."

"If they'd only vary it a bit," sighed young Grayson. "Why don't they use pears? There are always pears at a summer resort."

"Yet Miss Maitland had to come alone!" said a soulful young man, who evidently wished he had known of it in time. "It certainly was too bad of Stillwell."



"I might have—have married him," she faltered.

"He couldn't help it," another fellow spoke up. "Though it is just as too bad as if he could have. I wish Tracy would have let me persuade him. Then it would have been all right."

Eleanor almost dropped the glass of lemonade she was taking from Bertha, but she made no remark.

"Did you try to get him?" Miss Winthrop asked. "He's the tall fellow with the queer hair, isn't he?"

There was a laugh in Bertha's eyes that Eleanor alone caught when her color rose. Gordon's hair was no more queer than any one's, wavy over the temples, that was all.

"I never noticed his hair," the young man answered. "But I urged him to come along when I saw him this morn-

ing. He asked who was coming, and when I told him he said he wouldn't be needed, and he guessed he'd take his man and go fishing."

"Complimentary to us," Grayson said.

"Not at all," the young man assured him hastily. "All he meant was that he'd be the extra one if he came, that's all."

"People are so afraid of being 'extra,'" said Miss Winthrop scornfully. "It is so foolish. As if we couldn't stand having an extra man around, especially when he looks as nice as this stranger."

"In spite of his hair?" a man asked. "What would he think if he knew how much a topic of conversation he was?"

He'd be pleased to know he was so extremely interesting, I'm sure."

Of a sudden the whole affair, never very attractive to her, seemed to Eleanor flat, stale, and unprofitable. Even the banter bored her, and she set it down as worn threadbare in past ages. Didn't people ever say anything new, or at least say it in a different way? She was disgusted with herself for feeling cross and ill-natured.

Away down in her inner self she wondered whether Gordon Tracy had not refused because she was there. The foolish quarrel bid fair to separate them forever, and perhaps it was as well it did. A man who would let it do so was not of the firm stuff she could admire.

With the tablecloth folded, and the dishes repacked, Eleanor announced her intention to start back.

"I'm not hurrying the rest of you," she said. "But I am desperately tired, and, besides, I'd like to start while it is still comparatively early. The rest of you can stay, and enjoy your boat rides and the stars."

There was a chorus of protests and numerous assurances that she would be safe going back with the crowd at any hour, but Eleanor would not be persuaded to change her mind.

"I hope you'll forgive me," she told them. "But my mother would worry dreadfully if I were late. She'd be sure I'd had a puncture or been lost in the woods or something. It's been a lovely day, but I guess I got overtired last night."

So they let her go without further audible remark, and she and Bertha and the baskets packed themselves away in the runabout, and were off without loss of time, in order to take advantage of the glimmer of daylight that was left.

"I'm so sorry she had to go," Miss Winthrop said, with real regret, as the runabout vanished under the trees. "She's so nice. I'm afraid she didn't have the best sort of a time. She was working almost every minute over the supper, and we didn't have half a chance to give her a good time."

"I don't think anything would have done that," said her special cavalier, in a low voice. "It's easy to see that she's all upset over Stillwell's going. She wouldn't have a good time anywhere to-day."

"Oh, isn't that too bad? Is he quick-tempered or anything like that?"

"I don't pretend to be able to say as to that," the wise young man made answer. "Lovers' quarrels are beyond me. Hey! Don't throw away that pickle while I'm here! I could live on pickles."

Meanwhile an idea had come to Bertha, a truly French idea such as was hers occasionally. The only question was how to bring it about, and finish with one delightfully romantic stroke the work that had kept her so alert and intent for so many, many weeks.

The silent young lady beside her was not an inspiration to effort of any kind, for Bertha was still a little fearful lest she might be mistaken, her German caution holding a tight rein on her Latin romance. At the critical moment she wondered whether, after all, these cold, self-possessed ladies had any real hearts. She had heard the matter argued, and where there was room for argument there must be some grounds for suspicion. Then, just as she was beginning to despair of ever putting her little scheme into operation, Eleanor opened up the way for her.

CHAPTER X.

At the fork of the road, Eleanor stopped the car, and peered under the arching trees, uncertain which road to take.

"Funny I can't remember which way we came," she said nervously. "It's getting so dark I can't identify anything. Do you think you could do it, Bertha?"

This was the golden opportunity for which Bertha longed.

"Either way'll take you, miss," she said respectfully. "But if it was me, I'd like the lower road best. It goes along the water, miss, and there's like to be more folks about, and less chance

of roughs. Would you like that I ran it a bit, miss, seeing I knows the road?"

Eleanor was only too willing, as her eyes ached with the effort to see, and it was not hard for the country-bred maid. It might be acknowledged, too, that she ran it well, far more steadily than Eleanor herself. So they ran on down the slope past the fishing grounds, the cool breeze most grateful to their tired heads. Oddly enough, however, Bertha was not satisfied.

"There ain't so many folks about as I looked for," she said. "Usually there's men fishing here till all hours any night."

Eleanor, with closed eyes, her head resting against the side of the car, paid no heed, and Bertha was silent. Even if her mistress did not mean to reprove her by her silence, she had enough to do to handle the car properly. Besides, a little farther along the highway, she had caught sight of an auto drawn to a halt by the road, while a familiar figure loaded in fishpole rods and other paraphernalia.

Eleanor opened her eyes to the darkness when her car came to a jolting standstill.

"Mercy, Bertha!" she cried. "What was that? Have we run into a cow?"

Bertha looked very much concerned. "I'm ever so sorry, miss," she said, with apparent sincerity. "It acts like a busted tire already."

"Oh, dear! And we away off the main road!" Eleanor moaned. "Whatever shall we do?"

"There's another car," Bertha suggested, as if prompted by a sudden inspiration. "Maybe this here one can be fixed up once by them already."

Eleanor adopted the suggestion.

"Oh, man!" she called politely. "Can you tell me if there is a garage near here?"

The man touched his cap.

"No, miss," he said. "Not for a matter of two mile or more."

He was a chauffeur with no ingenuity, fearful probably of offending his master by offering aid. Eleanor looked about for a knight-errant, and spied a mussed and bedraggled young

man coming up from the beach with a basket and a pole. He was whistling "Clementina" somewhat off the key. She watched him eagerly, entirely unaware of the exchange of signals between Bertha and the respectful chauffeur, whose expression was eagerness itself.

"Sir," Eleanor addressed the stranger, "do you think you or your man could help us? We have a puncture, and I haven't the slightest idea what to do with it."

The young man whipped off his hideous automobile cap.

"Just let me get a look at it," he said eagerly. "Carl, bring one of the headlights, and we'll see."

It was Gordon Tracy!

"I assure you, I didn't know it was you," Eleanor stammered. "I wouldn't have——"

"I understand that, well enough," Gordon said bitterly. "Please don't rub it in."

Eleanor sprang lightly from the car, ignoring his proffered aid, and Bertha sauntered over to where Carl was struggling with the lamp.

"Wasn't the picnic a success?" Gordon asked, for lack of something else to say. "How did they come to let you come home alone?"

"I am not alone," Eleanor said coldly. "Bertha is with me."

"It's all the same. I don't understand Stillwell's doing such a thing," Gordon went on. "He isn't so careless usually."

"Mr. Stillwell has gone back to the city."

Gordon stared at her through the darkness. Was she unhappy because she had quarreled with him then, or could the glorious thing be possible——

"He had business to attend to," Eleanor added calmly. "He may come back later."

"Oh!" Gordon said shortly, his frail castles again proving unsubstantial. "Carl, hurry with that lamp."

"I don't see how you manage to be always everywhere," she said, with a nervous laugh to keep up appearances

before the servants. "No matter where I go or what I do, there you are."

"I hoped it was Fate," he said moodily. "Now, I—don't know. Oh, Carl, I say!"

The examination of the wheels took a long time, and Eleanor, tired of her perch on a flat stone, turned her back on the men, and walked down to the shore out of earshot. It was too provoking for anything that he, of all men, should be there, and yet he must see how accidentally it had all happened.

As soon as she had gone, Gordon stood up, and gave his orders in a low voice.

"Get in again, Bertha," he said. "Now, Carl, pile in after her. Draw out as quietly as possible, and don't breathe till you get beyond the turnpike. Quick!"

The runabout, minding the new hand on its wheel, turned silently and rapidly, and in another minute was on its way back up to the fork in the road from which point the upper road could be followed. At the turnpike, Carl spoke, unconsciously in his native German.

"Why didst thou do it?" he asked quaintly. "For me, or for him and her?"

"I don't understand."

"Yes, you do," Carl said, breaking into English. "There never a puncture was. Why was it you stop already?"

"Well, you see, it's him whose vi'lets and roses I don't get, and, besides, the fortune teller said——"

"Yah?"

"She said," Bertha ended, with apparent irrelevance; "she said he'd be German!"

When Eleanor, tired waiting to be called, came back up the slope, her car was gone. Gordon, with his hand extended, waited to help her into his own. Eleanor drew back.

"Your car is almost home," he said soberly. "There's only this one left. Are you willing to ride with me in mine?"

"How dared you?" Eleanor cried. "How could you?"

"I love you enough to dare even your anger," Gordon said, with a low laugh. "Are you going to reward me the way you have all winter, with hard words, just when I am most hopeful?"

"I don't see what right you have to be hopeful," she retorted, flushing. "I have said nothing to warrant your presumption."

"No," he said shakily. "But I gleaned a little hope from your sending him away. I have been rather out of it since he has been around. Come, Eleanor, I am not to be trifled with any more. I've come to a turnpike myself. I have got to ask you to condescend to go home in my car since there is no other way, but I'd be so glad if I knew you were willing to go. If I could hope that you were happy to go, I could believe you were not going to marry Oliver Stillwell."

Eleanor hesitated, the rich color rising in her face. "I might have—have married him," she faltered. "But just when I had made up my mind to it, you'd go and do some crazy thing, like sending home my gloves or not sending me flowers, that'd make me get to—thinking about you. That's all."

"No, it isn't!" he cried gleefully. "Oh, Eleanor, if I thought you would be glad to go with me in my car always, I'd take you right in my arms, and carry you there this minute!"

Eleanor gazed at the sky, and then dropped her eyes to his shyly.

"Well," she faltered at last, after an interminable time, "you see, I do like your car—a little. I don't believe it gets punctured out of a clear sky like mine, and, anyhow, it's—it's comfortable. Hadn't we better go? It's—it's late. Oh, Gordon!"





A Christmas Conspiracy at Copper

BY
Anne O'Hagan

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ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

CHAPTER I.

WHEN Copper Junction prepares to celebrate Christmas, it does so with a pained sense of its own natural shortcomings, and with a stalwart determination to rise superior to nature. The fact that nothing in its scenery suggests the Christmas card of tradition is felt by its inhabitants to be a hardship; but they labor manfully and womanfully to overcome the lack. It is seldom that snow falls at the appropriate season, and when it does it is more likely to come in the form of a blinding, fierce blizzard than of a soft, feathery, steady downfall; and, after the blizzard has wrought all possible damage, the brilliant sun shines down through the high, thin air, and in an hour or two there is no trace of the first requisite of a successful sleighing party.

On the distant, high, purple peaks, visible against the horizon from Copper Junction, sometimes white patches lie for months at a time, but down on the plateau they are, as homesick Easterners bitterly feel, the most evanescent of Christmas properties.

If snow, as other regions know it, is invariably absent from the Christmas landscape at Copper Junction, its absence is not atoned for by any dark showing of evergreens. Cactus and alligator pear, stunted oak and dwarfed juniper—these are the chief vegetable products of the country lying about the little town.

But, in spite of all its lamentable deficiencies, the town essays to celebrate

the festival as fully as possible. From more favored regions, fir trees are imported, and wreaths of ground pine and holly. The business which the one druggist, who is also the one stationer, does in crinkled, crimson paper, is prodigious; the skill which some of the decoratively minded young ladies of the town expend upon sham Christmas wreaths, executed in cardboard with the help of shears, paste pot, and color box, is really amazing. The Christmas parties which are planned are of the good old sort that have been conventional since before Washington Irving began to write. The occasional half-breed helper in the houses of New England settlers is sternly instructed in the art of mince-pie and plum-pudding making.

But, for the most part, the houses of New England settlers, and of all other kinds, boast of no helpers, half-breed or otherwise. And the good ladies of these establishments exchange recipes for dainties from home without the mediation of a servant; and they test the results of one another's labors in a spirit in which housewifely criticism is subjected entirely to the desire to have everything as Christmasy as possible.

Out in the big, staring, red-brick convent beyond the city, the gentle sisters instruct their dark little charges—orphaned Indian and Mexican children—in the rites of the day. Down in the town, in the adobe parsonage next to the adobe chapel, the Reverend Mr. Witherspoon and his helpmeet—if the title "Reverend" were won by deeds

alone it would be hers as well as his—prepare for a Sunday-school festival as like as possible to the one they remember in New Hampshire. Across the street from them—if one chooses to dignify the unpaved roadway, with its wooden walks, by so magnificent a title—Doctor and Mrs. Mabie are instructing their two children, aged eight and five, in proper Christmas lore, including not only Santa Claus, but open fireplaces, jingling bells, snowy roads, and evergreen woods with limbs weighted down by the soft, ermine garments of the winter.

Up on the second floor of the Palace Hotel, where a wide hall offers a sort of general assembly room for those ladies who, being guests of the establishment, do not care for the downstairs parlors, opposite the bar and adjacent to the roulette room, several of these are engaged in preparing a big Christmas tree. Wives of mining prospectors, of travelers, of visiting cattlemen, stranded untimely in the region—they are striving to make the best of their barren situation.

On the schoolhouse door hangs the announcement that "A Genuine, Old-fashioned Christmas Entertainment" will be held within at seven o'clock sharp on the evening of December twenty-fourth. A similar notice, differing only in date, is tacked to the chapel door. And wreaths of red paper, garlanded behind the plate-glass windows of "Tom's Place," "John's Place," "Bill's Place," and all the rest of the "places," give equally definite notice that they also are prepared to furnish Christmas entertainment according to their lights.

It was all very familiar, gloomily familiar, to Mr. Sandy McMahon, riding loose-jointedly into the metropolis from Lost Silver Lake camp. As far as he could observe, there were no changes in Copper Junction or in its form of greeting to the season since he had first ridden into it, ten years ago. Yes, there was the new jail, a squat, brick edifice at the end of a vista; that was new; there had been only an unsanitary old Spanish prison ten years ago; and there

were two or three new adobe cottages, presenting prim, white-curtained faces to an admiring world—ten years ago Sandy did not recall any white curtains in Copper Junction. And there was a new smelter—yes, and a Queen Anne cottage dotting the desert beyond it, the dwelling which the superintendent had had constructed for his bride three or four years ago. But as for any real change, any improvement in the Christmas arrangements, Sandy could not perceive that Copper Junction had achieved it.

"And never will be able to," he predicted grimly, "as long as this God-forsaken climate is like what it is. It isn't fit," he earnestly assured the circumambient air, "for anything but rattlers and greasers to live in."

With which disparagement Mr. McMahon dropped from his horse in front of the first one of the row of "places" festooned with red paper. He was about to fasten his pony to one of the posts obligingly driven in the ground before the establishment, when he saw, emerging from the front door of the Palace Hotel, across the street, a figure which interested him. It was that of Miss Mabel Lee, sister to the wife of the physician, teacher to such of the young of Copper Junction as could be collected in the schoolhouse. Mr. McMahon was always interested in any sight of Miss Lee. The fact that she was bearing precariously in her arms a huge glass punch bowl added, he thought, to her charm. He crossed the street to greet her.

"Can't I carry that for you, Miss Mabel?" he asked ingratiatingly.

Miss Mabel blushed, and then she paled again. When Sandy, tall, lean, lithe, brown of skin, blue of eye, and drawling of tone, bent a particular look of appeal upon a young lady, it was apt to cause her some wavering of color, some fluttering of the heart.

"Oh, thank you, Mr. McMahon!" exclaimed Miss Lee vivaciously. "When did you come into town? Only just now? Thank you—will you take it? I'm just carrying it into the schoolhouse. It's for lemonade for the chil-

dren at to-night's Christmas tree. Mr. Schmidt lent it to me."

"Schmidt's a lucky hotelkeeper to have anything you want, anything that you'll consent to take," replied Sandy, with gloomy significance in his voice.

"Now, Mr. McMahon!" The little school-teacher was plainly rebuking her helper for some meaning not immediately apparent in his remark.

They pushed open the door of the schoolroom, and Sandy, looking more gigantic than before as he walked up the aisle between the low desks and benches of Copper Junction's smallest scholars, deposited the punch bowl on a table set adjacent to a Christmas tree in one corner of the little room. The maps were rolled up off the walls; commonplace statements as to the capitals of countries, and the results of subtracting and dividing certain sums by certain others, had all been neatly erased from the blackboards, and these blossomed instead with various Christmas sentiments written in the most legible of copy-plate hands.

"Your writing, Miss Mabel?" demanded Sandy, nodding toward a "God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen," on one board. Miss Lee blushing admitted that it was.

"Wish I had a better opportunity to become acquainted with it," declared Sandy. Miss Lee made no answer, but began busying herself with the arrangement of the table. Sandy watched her wistfully. "You haven't thought any better about writing to me sometimes?" he said at last.

"I haven't heard anything to make me think better," replied Miss Lee. "I haven't heard that there had been any great change in your ways."

"I'd change them soon enough if you'd make it worth my while," declared Sandy fervently.

The girl looked at him gravely, rather sadly.

"And don't you think I have given you anything to make it worth your while?" she asked.

"No, I don't. I don't call it giving me anything to tell me that if I keep sober for two years, then you'll see!

If you had told me that you'd have me, why, then——" Sandy's voice expressed a joyful belief in the regenerating influence of such a promise. "But you don't. Suppose I start in, and stay as sober as old Brother Witherspoon for two years—what's to hinder your marrying anybody else you take a fancy to in the whole Magellan Range?"

"Nothing," replied the little school-teacher quietly. "And neither is there anything to prevent your doing the same thing."

"But I don't want to do anything of the sort," stormed Sandy. "It's you I'm crazy about, it's you I want to marry, it's you——"

"It's me," said the little school-teacher, flushed and ungrammatical, but very resolute, "that you'll never have any chance with at all, except under the conditions you know. If I'm not worth that, if you aren't willing to do that much——"

"But," drawled Sandy, "you've never said that you would have me even then."

"No, but I've said that you might have a chance, that you might stand at least even with the others. Of course, if you don't care to——"

"The others? What others?" demanded Sandy, righteously irate.

Miss Lee looked up at him, and dimpled.

"What others?" she mocked him. Then she burst into a ringing laugh.

"Oh, you amazing man!" she said. "Did ever a girl have such a remarkable suitor? But I've told you, half a dozen times——"

"Eight," Sandy corrected her.

"That there was absolutely no sense in your ever bringing up the subject again until you had stayed sober for two years."

"There's worse faults than an occasional spree," declared Mr. McMahon gloomily.

"Maybe, if you're looking at it from the point of view of the man himself," conceded Mabel, with a wealth of sad wisdom in her eyes. "But not if you look at it from the point of view of his wife. I'd rather——" her face darkened

with intensity of meaning—"I'd rather be married to a horse thief than a drunkard. That wouldn't be an every-day-in-the-year disgrace, an every-night-of-the-year dread. And when he was caught it would be over, once for all."

"To hear you talk," grumbled the aggrieved Sandy, "any one would think that I never drew a sober breath. I don't drink any more than most of the men round about here—it just happens to exhilarate me a little more. If I could take my liquor, quiet and secret like, you wouldn't know anything about it. It's just because I whoop things up a bit that I've got the reputation I have. Why?"—Sandy's voice was full of the consciousness of rectitude—"I haven't been on a spree more than six times within a year—well, not more than eight, anyway."

"Well, that's six—or eight—times too many," said Miss Lee, with decision. "What's the good of our talking about it any more?"

There was an impatient sadness in her manner.

"You see," explained Sandy, "you've never said you didn't like me. Of course, you've never said that you did, either—that is, not in the way I want you to. But I've got a feeling inside"—he drew nearer, and looked down upon her daringly and tenderly, and she blushed—"that you do care a little. I don't believe it would be in nature"—Mr. McMahon fell into philosophy—"for a man to feel the way I feel when I see you, without the woman's feeling a little the same way. It wouldn't be right, it wouldn't be just. And I tell you again that the minute you marry me, I quit the booze for good and all. Oh, Mabel—can't you?"

The philosopher was lost in the appealing lover. But Mabel, grave-eyed, grave-lipped, shook her head sadly.

"I know too well what it means," she told him. "I know what my mother's life was; I never said as much as that to any one before. But I want you to realize that I know what I am talking about. And now, Mr. McMahon, if you ever so much as bring up this subject again—unless you've stood the test

I have put you to—there'll be no more speech between us. If you're not willing to give up drink long enough to make me believe in the—the feeling you claim to have for me, why, it's a sort of an insult for you to keep talking about that feeling."

Sandy, with a few heated words on the obscure workings of the feminine mind, and the total absence of a sense of justice in the feminine make-up, withdrew, somewhat noisily, from the schoolhouse. He looked about him at the brilliant, vivid, blue and violet and other of the landscape.

"This is going to be the hell of a Christmas," he announced to the bright sunshine.

And then, being a man of action, he strode into the nearest of the "places"—they were all situated so that thirsty visitors at Copper might have the least possible difficulty in assuaging thirst—and set himself seriously about a Christmas celebration which should be historic.

The early stages of Sandy's Christmas celebration were reminiscent. He informed an indifferent group of auditors that Christmas in New Mexico was vastly inferior to Christmas in Connecticut, and more particularly to Christmas in Mystic, Connecticut, the fortunate town which claimed him for a son. According to him, there was always plenty of snow in December in the favored region where he was born; it was always sufficiently well packed to make sleigh rides a constant feature of Yuletide merriment. The nights were full of frostily glinting stars and of the sweet clamor of sleigh bells. On every hearth blazed ruddy fires; in every parlor stood sweet-smelling fir trees, glittering with candles and baubles. Song competed with the sleigh bells for the dominance of the night air. All neighbors were friends, and there was much interchanging of good will and of gifts. Mystic, Connecticut, became in Sandy's narration a snowy, but not uncomfortably cold, earthly paradise, and the annual Christmas celebration a foretaste of the millennium.

"Why didn't you stay there if you

were so dead stuck on it?" demanded one of Sandy's listeners, whose potatoes had the effect of making him morosely belligerent.

Sandy took the question in bad part; he intimated that he, unlike his questioner, had not left his native place for its good and at its urgent, undeniable request. The morose gentleman's outraged honor expressed itself in an effort to attack Sandy, but his limbs were unfortunately unable to obey the dictates of his will, and, having fallen, he sat upon the floor, looking about him in a surprised fashion, until the employees of the place restored him to uprightness, and admonished him against the display of a bellicose spirit.

Sandy continued his reminiscences. He had reached the stage in which he was contented with the droning sound of his own voice, and did not care particularly for the attention of his auditors. He recalled his father and mother, his youthful playmates. One of them was a sister—the most affectionate, the most gifted of girls, according to Sandy's fond recollections. She had met a fate worthy of her gifts—she had married a fine fellow; he had sat in the State legislature, he was a man of importance, of means, of affairs; Sandy's sister kept hired help—two of it; Sandy's mother lived with his sister in the lap of luxury; Sandy himself would be an honored guest in this home of magnificence any time he felt the impulse to visit it.

"You ain't never been back home, have you, Sandy?" asked one of his hearers, stirred to a faint interest.

Sandy sadly shook his head. He never had been back home, not in ten years; and he guessed it would be ten years more before he went back. He was not going to appear there except in the liberal guise of a highly successful adventurer of the West. No Connecticut legislator was going to be able to



It had been six or seven months since he wrote, but, by Jove, it wouldn't be six or seven hours before he wrote again!

look upon him, no purse-proud sister was going to be able to cherish even a minute's fear that he had come to borrow money. No narrow-minded, gossiping set of New Englanders should have the opportunity to discuss him. In short, Sandy veered in his attitude toward his early home with the astounding suddenness which is characteristic of gentlemen in his state.

"But the old lady, Sandy? The old lady? Your mother—she hasn't gone back on you, has she?" demanded a fellow imbibor of the liquid refreshments served in Bob's Place.

Sandy wept as he declared that his mother had not gone back on him, as he asseverated his belief that the sun had never shone upon so good, so loyal, so altogether desirable a mother. When had he written to her? Oh, well, he wasn't much of a hand at writing, but he and the old lady understood each other; it had been six or seven months since he wrote, but, by Jove, it wouldn't

be six or seven hours before he wrote again! He'd write her a Christmas letter—he'd send her a Christmas present. He always had written her a Christmas letter, and sent her a Christmas present.

He appealed to the oldest of his acquaintances present—didn't Lawrence remember that he had sent his mother a Navaho blanket one year, and that the year before he had sent her a Navaho blanket? In recounting the tale of the years, it appeared that Sandy's invariable present to his mother had been a Navaho blanket. He arose now, and staggered forth, declaring that he was about to buy her another, and to send it at once—she'd get it before New Year—anyway.

"It's something different from what they can get her, back there," he said proudly.

In the velvety darkness of the night, the schoolhouse across the road shone with many lights. He could hear the voices of the children singing "Oh, little town of Bethelhem, how sweet and still you lie," and through an uncurtained pane he could catch a glimpse of Mabel Lee leading them.

A feeling of profound self-pity drove all his filial intentions from his mind. He leaned against the post and wept, and he declared to a passer-by that he was the most ill-used of men. It was in the power of that woman across the street, he brokenly asseverated, to make a new man of him, to reform him, to make him the soberest citizen in the whole State. But would she speak the word? She would not! And his doom, the ruin of his life, was upon her head.

His friend, who was in a mood to appreciate Sandy's condition, and greatly sympathetic, led him away toward the next of the garishly lighted places, where thirst might be assuaged and sorrows forgotten.

It was not so "straight" a resort as Bob's, which they had just left. There was a dance hall in the rear, and there were also ladies not overfastidious as to their partners.

When she looked forth from her window at midnight, the school festival being safely over, Mabel Lee saw a

boisterous crowd issuing from this saloon. In the bright shaft of light with which its open door pierced the night, she recognized Sandy. It was one of the inconveniences of Copper Junction that it was a small settlement, in which there was no geographical vision between the habitats of the sheep and goats of society. She turned away from the window, with eyes whose sadness had been cleared by anger, and a mouth whose droop had been converted into a hard, straight line.

"Two years!" she told the little mirror over her dressing table. "Two years! It would have to be twenty after this—two hundred!"

Nevertheless, her pillow was wet with tears that night before she slept.

CHAPTER II.

On Christmas morning there alighted from the train which drew in at the Copper Junction Station a little old lady. Little old ladies were rare in the town. In the fifteen or twenty years of its existence there had not been time for it to develop a crop of little old ladies of its own, and few of its hardy settlers had brought these ornaments of the home with them.

The sight of one, therefore, timorously alighting at the station, created some excitement. The fact that she carried a multitude of bundles with her, which were entirely beyond her ability to manage, added to the interest which she had for the station hangers-on.

The conductor of the train shouted some information concerning her to the station agent as the train pulled out. The baggage master and his assistant hurried toward her, and reached her simultaneously with the driver of Copper Junction's one hack, who was beginning persuasively to tell her attractions of the Palace Hotel.

"Anybody expecting you, ma'am?" asked the baggage master, elbowing the hack driver aside.

"Well, I don't exactly know," chirped the old lady, with a nervous smile. "I wrote to my son that I was coming, but I haven't heard anything from him

since, and so I don't know whether he's looking for me or not. He don't live here, but the railroad people told me there wasn't any railroad ran to where he does live, and that I must get off here and take the stage out to his place."

"What place is that?" asked the hack driver, the baggage master, and his assistant, and the station agent, who had joined the group, in unison.

"It's Santorita," said the old lady. "Do any of you gentlemen know where that is?"

All of the gentlemen, it seemed, were intimately acquainted with Santorita. It was only a matter of forty miles from Copper Junction, and so, of course, they knew it intimately. The old lady looked crestfallen at the information that it lay forty miles away.

"But you won't be able to go up there before Thursday," said the station agent. "The stage is due here generally of a Tuesday, and goes back of a Wednesday. But, on account of this being Christmas, it ain't likely that Sam Porter will start before Tuesday. He'll get here Wednesday, and he won't start out again before Thursday. But don't you go to feeling upset about it," he went on reassuringly. "There ain't a hospitable town of its size on the map than Copper Junction, and it ain't going to see any lady stranded and lonesome on Christmas Day."

The old lady averred that they were all very kind, and added her opinion that most all the people in the world were kind. She, for her part, although this was her first expedition out of her native State of Connecticut, had met with nothing but kindness all the way. She had got rather mixed up in Chicago, and had missed a day by missing a train, and another day by accepting the hospitality of the young lady who did manicuring in the ladies' waiting room of the big station.

"She said I really ought to see something of the city as long as I was there, for it was a city worth seeing; and, indeed, it seemed to be. But dirty! But that was the way I got here too late for Christmas. I had calculated to spend the holiday with my son."

"And who might your son be?" asked the hack driver.

The group, now increased to eight or ten persons, looked interestedly at the old lady.

"Oh!" She laughed at her oversight. "I never told you that, did I? Why, he is Mr. McMahon—Mr. Alexander McMahon. Happen any of you to know him?"

There was a moment's pause. A look of dismay dawned on some of the faces by which old Mrs. McMahon was surrounded. But the baggage master, proving himself fit for high diplomacy, fairly beamed as though with pride and pleasure.

"Know Sandy McMahon! Well, I guess there's nobody in the Magellan Range that don't know Sandy, and don't like him, too! It's a wonder none of us didn't recognize you from your resemblance to him. You ain't got his height, but there sure is a look—is it about the eyes now, or the mouth?"

The baggage master appealed to the others. He kicked one of them violently on the ankle as an intimation that he was not going to keep up an unassisted monologue on the subject of Sandy.

The gentleman thus appealed to, withdrawing his injured shin from the immediate neighborhood of the baggage master's toe, stuttered out the opinion that it was Mrs. McMahon's eyes which were the badge of her relationship with Sandy. Then they all looked at her, smiling pleasantly but somewhat helplessly. The hack driver, taking advantage of the temporary lull in ideas among his companions, began again to sound the praises of the Palace Hotel. But the baggage master, man of happy inspirations, interposed.

"I tell you what it is," he declared cordially, "the best people in our town would take it pretty hard if we should let Sandy's mother put up at any hired hotel on Christmas Day. I'd take you home with me, Mrs. McMahon, but my wife is in bed with our fourth, and her mother's there, and there ain't much room."

He paused, scratching his head over



"Anybody expecting you, ma'am?" asked the baggage master.

the arithmetical problem of expanding his house.

The station agent came to his rescue.

"Doctor Mabie's house is the one for Mrs. McMahon," he declared firmly. "Not that the rest of us wouldn't be pleased to have her stay with us, but because the doc has got the biggest house in town, and not the biggest family to keep in it. Besides," he added, "Miss Lee is such a friend, and all, of Sandy's——"

"Miss Lee?" Mrs. McMahon pounced upon the name, and the station agent had a moment of misgiving as to his fitness for negotiating delicate matters of state.

The whole chorus burst forth into incoherent explanation; Miss Lee was the

school-teacher, Miss Lee was the doctor's wife's sister, Miss Lee was a sort of public character in the town, a sort of unofficial official—she was, in short, Sandy's agitated mother was given to understand, anything but the young lady to whom Sandy was paying marked attention.

The hack driver still murmured something as to the claims of the Palace Hotel, but the baggage master drew him aside and admonished him.

"You great galoot, you!" he remarked irately. "Ain't you got any feelings of delicacy? Ain't you got the sense you was born with? Here you know as well as any one that Sandy McMahon is on a record-breaking toot, and instead of trying to second me in trying to get his ma put where she can't hear nothing about it, you're all for dragging her to the one place in town where she'd be bound to see him! I suppose you think it would be a nice Christmas party for her to be leaning over

the banister there, when that pie-eyed Indian came in and began shooting the bulbs off the electric lights? Didn't you have a mother of your own?"

Humbly the hack driver acknowledged that his zeal for business and for the reputation of the Palace Hotel had outrun his social discretion. As a mark of his entire sympathy with the movement to keep Sandy's mother in ignorance of Sandy's condition, he magnanimously placed his vehicle at the disposal of the self-constituted committee of welfare for Mrs. McMahon. The baggage master handsomely accepted this handsome offer.

"I'll drive up to Doctor Mabie's, myself," he said, "and see what they say about taking in the old lady. Then I'll

come back and get her. And meantime let the word be passed along that Sandy McMahon is to cut short his Christmas drunk right where it is, and that he's to be kept hidden until he's good and sober. A fine-looking sight he'd be, meeting his mother to-day."

Mrs. Mabie was engaged in basting a wild turkey in a kitchen stove when the delegate arrived from the station. Miss Lee, who, although a little pale, was bearing a gallant part in the Christmas celebration of the children in the parlor, received him. The situation was explained to her briefly, and her pallor was replaced by a delicious flood of color at the information that Sandy's mother was in town. It faded again when the station agent dwelt upon his reasons for thinking a private dwelling the safest refuge for the old lady.

"It's no way for a mother to see her son, the way Sandy is now. You know, Miss Mabel. He's just rip-roaring drunk, and he's due to keep it up for three or four days if he ain't stopped. Well, he's got to be stopped. But it's best for her to be in a place where she won't run any risk of unexpectedly meeting him. And Mrs. Mabie is back from East herself?" he ended on an inquiring note.

Mabel declared that she was sure her sister would be glad to bear a part in saving Mrs. McMahon's Christmas from complete disaster. And Mrs. Mabie, summoned from the savory kitchen, assented eagerly to the plan of quartering the newcomer upon her.

"But how," she asked, "is—er—the rest of it going to be managed?" She darted a look toward her sister, and grew even redder than the kitchen oven had left her. "How is Sandy to be—well, to be sobered up?"

"You leave that to me," said the station agent grimly. "When there ain't no reason in particular why a man should stay sober, I'd be the last person in the world to put any stumblingblock in the path between him and liquor. But when there is a reason—" His silence expressed the resoluteness with which he would undertake the task of making the drunkard's way a difficult one.

"I should like to know," exclaimed Mabel hotly, "when there ever was a time that there was no particular reason why a man should be kept sober. Lots of the hardest drinkers around here have wives and children. Are they no reason?"

"Well, Miss Mabel," philosophized the station agent, "they ain't the same kind of reason. A man's wife comes pretty near to being his own size, and ought to be able to fight out any little dispute with him without calling for help; his wife, or any lady that's interested in him thataway—looking toward matrimony, I mean. Besides, while it's possible to put a game against Sandy in this one case, with his ma waiting, you wouldn't get quite the same—quite the same"—the station agent floundered, and wished that he had had early advantages of the sort which supply men with a fluent vocabulary—"quite the same coöperation from all the citizens," he ended triumphantly, "if you should try it on in many cases. One is about the limit, I reckon. Well, Mrs. Mabie, then I'll be bringing the old lady back. You won't regret it when you see her. She's the sort that no Christmas chimney corner ought to be without."

Mrs. Mabie and her sister concurred heartily in this opinion when the hack, returning in ten minutes, deposited at the Mabie door a little old lady with white hair parted beneath a black bonnet, and drawn over her ears to a modest knot in the back; a little old lady whose blue eyes behind their gold-rimmed spectacles were still bright and capable of sparkling, and whose wrinkled cheeks held, in addition to their permanent winter-apple glow, a deepened flush of excitement.

The like of her had not been seen in Copper Junction within its history, so Mrs. Mabie enthusiastically averred. The only old lady who approached Mrs. McMahon in dignity of years was of another type; with her own hands she had helped to erect one of the first white men's dwellings in the town, twenty years before, and she had contracted at that time a liking for masculine habits which she never quite outgrew;

she cut her iron-gray hair short, crowned it with a man's soft-brimmed hat, wore a gray flannel shirt instead of a lawn kerchief, and took great comfort in her pipe. Decidedly, Mrs. McMahon was of another sort.

Mrs. McMahon looked sharply out upon Miss Lee when that young person was presented to her. But the girl's pretty young face, wistful, and sweet, and eager, disarmed her of any instinctive jealousy she may have felt.

"They tell me you and Sandy are good friends," she said, patting Mabel's plump hand between her wrinkled ones.

Mabel murmured something to the effect that they were as good friends as people who live forty miles apart and didn't see each other half a dozen times a year are likely to be. But Sandy's mother paid little attention to the denial implied in the young woman's words.

"He never was much of a hand for girls, Sandy wasn't," she said comfortably. "Some boys are always running after them from the time they're little fellows, but Sandy wasn't that sort. It was always a gun and the woods, or a fish line and the brook for him—not dangling around petticoats. He was like his father that way. My husband—I don't believe he ever looked at another girl beside me. It's a good sort to tie up with, my dear." And she patted Mabel's hand again.

Mabel flushed violently, and muttered inarticulate replies.

"He's an awful poor hand to write, Sandy is," chirped Sandy's mother. "I guess I haven't heard from him all the year. Well, I ain't much of a hand at writing myself, although I'm a powerful talker. That's why I thought I'd come on and see Sandy. I thought we could get a lot of talking done that we'd never get through if we waited to write it. My daughter, Sandy's sister—I live with her, you know—she thought it would be too much for me, the trip and all. I didn't tell her so, but it seemed to me it would be a lot less hard on me than another Christmas at her house. She has six—all boys; two of them are at school, boarding school, I mean, and when they come home for the holidays

they bring two or three of their school-mates with them—boys that live too far off to go home, or that have parents in Asia or somewheres; it's a great school for missionaries' boys, my grandsons' school is.

"But, between you and me, I thought traveling across the continent wouldn't be as hard on me as just sitting there at home with my knitting, while those eight or ten young ones overran the house. Not but what they're nice boys. And, besides, I wanted to see Sandy. I wanted"—she patted Mabel's hand kindly, and looked with tender inquisitiveness into her face—"to see if he wasn't thinking of settling down, and what sort of a girl he was thinking of settling down with!"

Mabel blushed guiltily as she withdrew her hand, and said that she didn't believe that Mr. McMahon had any present intention of settling down. But Sandy's mother shook her sentimental old head. She had quite lost her heart to the pretty girl, and she recalled, with romantic stirrings of the heart and determinedly romantic interpretations, the declaration of the group at the station as to Mabel's friendship with her son.

"There, there!" she said soothingly. "All in good time I'll hear everything. I ain't one to want to pry. All in good time! All in good time!"

"But, Mrs. McMahon, truly—" began Mabel, in fiery distress.

And then the doctor's wife came bustling to the door, and interrupted the avowal she was about to make. She did not quite know what it was to be. Had Sandy ever written anything to his mother about her? Of course, she couldn't tell the dear old woman the reason that there was no such situation as the one for which her sentimental soul evidently yearned; hardly, with all the settlement in a pious conspiracy to deceive the traveler! On the whole, Mrs. Mabie's entrance solved a problem for her—temporarily, at any rate.

Beyond the safe shelter of the doctor's dwelling, a committee of the town's citizens had been hastily organized for the purpose of finding, capturing, and incarcerating Sandy. One of

its minor duties was to inform the keepers of all the "places"—Tom's, Bob's, Dick's, and the rest—exactly what would befall them if Sandy McMahon was permitted to get drunk while his mother abode in Copper Junction.

With the exception of Dick, they were all chivalrously amenable to approach. Dick sulkily declared that he was not running any adjunct to the Y. M. C. A.; that he conducted a saloon—with social attachments; that any gent who wanted a drink, and had the money to pay for it, who wanted a dance, or a game of cards, and who conducted himself "as a gent should," would be welcomed in his resort at any time.

The baggage master stood over the recalcitrant Dick—a tall, broad baggage master, notoriously keen of eye and quick of aim, a dangerous citizen in the days before he became a pillar of stable society—and he reasoned softly with Dick. His friends and comrades stood around, and eyed the obstinate man with expressive glances; lovingly they fingered divers weapons.

And whether it was the look in their eyes, or the gently persuasive manner of the big baggage master, is questionable; but the determined Dick was melted to join the campaign which had for its immediate object Mr. McMahon's sobriety, and for its indirect one the peace of mind of Mr. McMahon's mother.

"Of course, though," he pointed out gloomily, "you ain't goin' to make any teetotaler of Sandy McMahon just by gettin' Copper's joints to boycott him. Fiero ain't so much farther from San-torita, an' the booze they sell there is sure poison."

"Word'll be passed along to Fiero," declared the baggage master, the light of remembered conflict gleaming joyously in his eyes. "An' if that one-hoss, God-forgotten, last hole in the desert wants to go contrary to what Copper thinks best on this subject—why, let it! An' let it remember the time it tried to get the school-teacher away from us, and what happened to it

then! An' what happened when it tried to get the revival meetin's we had planned! An' what——"

"Ah, that's enough," said the station agent easily. "If Fiero gets funny, it won't take long to wipe it off the map. It ought to have been did long ago, but—times ain't what they were!"

Dick smiled skeptically upon the delegation, which thus lightly added to its labors as a reform committee the possible task of town destroyer. But he gave his word not to be what the hack driver called a "scab" in the matter of Sandy McMahon.

Sandy, who was enjoying himself in a sufficiently maniacal fashion, mounted upon his pony and performing wild feats of horsemanship at the edge of the town, received the delegation bent upon his capture with exuberant cordiality. He thought that their purpose was merely admiring, that they had come forth to gaze, with half-envious eyes, upon his prodigious skill on horseback. When he had displayed it to them for some time he was ready to dismount and talk to them, ready to tell them how they, too, might attain the same dexterity and strength. And when he had passed his arm through a bridle loop, and had joined them with this entirely amiable intention, he was lost.

They bore him back to the Palace Hotel, where the docile Mr. Schmidt had lent himself whole-heartedly to the plan of regeneration. Mr. Schmidt saw, as clearly as any one could desire, that Sandy must be sobered up in order that his mother's Christmas might be unspoiled. To that end he lent a room, and, lest its stout door should prove frail against the imprisoned gentleman's assaults, he lent a strong man to mount guard within it.

Sandy, though powerful and belligerent, was not sufficiently powerful to dominate the situation as arranged by the friendly conspirators. When he had wasted a good deal of his strength and energy in fruitless rebellion, he subsided gloomily. He vowed vengeance, of course. But he was darkly puzzled in his mind by the situation.

He had always been a popular sort of fellow, he had; men had been pleased to drink with him, to ride with him, to talk and laugh with him. Why this astounding change? Why this sudden, black villainy?

By the morning of December twenty-sixth, the arbiters of Sandy's immediate destiny thought him sufficiently recovered from his celebration to learn the reason of his incarceration.

"We weren't going to have no nice-looking little old lady like that mother of yours all broke up like she would have been if she'd have seen you yesterday," said the baggage master. "And as long as any little old lady like that does this town the honor to stay in it, or near it, she ain't to be worried by any drunken son," he added, in tones that held more than mere hope or mere prophecy.

Sandy leaped to his feet. His mother here? Where? Why? When?

"Sit down!" said the baggage master firmly. "You ain't to see her till the last remnant of that foolishness of yours is gone; you ain't to see her till to-morrow. You'll spend this day in putting the finishing touch on that sobering-up of yours, and to-morrow you can shave yourself real pretty, and you'll have slept some of the dull look out of your eyes, and you can go and

see her. She's being well took care of; she's happy and comfortable. She's over to Doc Mabie's"—Sandy's tell-tale face fell at the information—"and she and Miss Mabel are getting along like a house afire. Miss Mabel is telling her how fine and popular you are out

here, and she's retaliating by telling Miss Mabel what a cunning little boy you were. Say, Sandy, were you a cunning little boy?"

Sandy profanely bade the baggage master to recall his own cunning childhood, and to leave other people's alone. But he sat and did some serious reflecting.

On the morning of his release from durance, he was escorted to Doctor Mabie's by a committee of apparently enthusiastic citizens. He was letter-perfect in the part they had assigned to him; no, he had never received the letter announcing his mother's intention to visit him; and that part was true enough, for Sandy had left Santorita, the camp at which Sam Porter's stage deposited the mail bag once a week, before the letter had arrived. But

some one riding out that way on Christmas Day had sent the word along—and here he was!

He looked uncomfortable enough as, with suggestions, interruptions, and promptings from his friends, he stumbled through with the tale. Sandy was



"Perhaps," faltered Mabel, "it needn't be quite so long!"

no liar, and he prevaricated with a very ill grace. He felt more ashamed of himself, muttering these untruths with Mabel Lee's clear eyes upon him, than he had ever felt when he had more conspicuously sinned against her code in her sight.

But as he looked at her, sheepishly, apologetically, lovingly, despairingly, it seemed to him that there was more of yielding on her face than he had ever seen there before. Was it possible that she could bear a liar—she who was so hard upon the trifling misconduct of which he was occasionally guilty? And was it not shocking that he cared more about the emotions depicted upon Mabel Lee's countenance than those on his dear, wrinkled, old mother's?

How white her hair had grown! How pitiful were the tears that she declared were tears of joy in her old eyes! What a fine, brave, old sport she had been to undertake that long journey into the unknown with no misgivings! And how long was she going to stay?

He recalled the immense calmness, the immense inevitableness, with which he had been told that he could not drink again while she remained in Copper. Not, of course, that he wanted to—at any rate, not now, with Mabel's shining face so near and so softened!

"I calculate to stay a couple of years, boy," replied his mother placidly, when the question had been put to her. "It's too expensive a trip to be taking often. Louise, she thought I mightn't find it comfortable, and she talked a good deal about rattlesnakes. But I told her I never had seen the place yet I couldn't make comfortable if I had a mind to stay, and that I thought you needed me some, as well as she did."

"Right you are, marm!" said Sandy heartily. "And if you stay two years"—he faced Mabel gayly—"you'll just be

in time for a wedding! Won't she?" he added appealingly.

"What you waiting two years for? I knew it all the time!" cried the little old lady, in incoherent delight.

But Sandy felt suddenly afraid after his bold sally.

"I wasn't fair—I oughtn't to have said it!" he cried appealingly.

"Oh," conceded Mabel, "if your mother stays two years—and you—and you—if everything goes all right all that time, and you still feel the same way—why, I guess there'll be a wedding."

"If I feel the same way!" he cried rapturously.

"It's all nonsense, this waiting," grumbled the excited little old lady.

"Leastways, in Sandy's case it is. I had to keep his pa waiting a year. His pa"—she turned to Mabel explanatorily—"his pa was as like Sandy as two peas, looks, and disposition, and all, except that as a young man Mr. McMahon was a bit wild—drank, you know! Well, he had to quit that for a year before he could get me!" she nodded coquettishly.

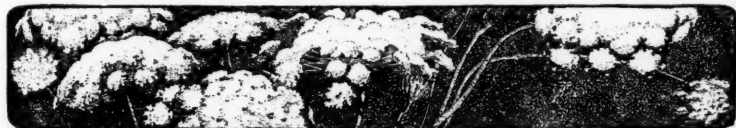
"And afterward?" breathed Mabel. "Was it all right afterward?"

"Indeed, and it was! He never touched a drop from the day we went over our own doorsill together! But I made him wait his year. I don't see the sense of it with Sandy, though."

"Perhaps," faltered Mabel, "it needn't be quite so long!"

And Sandy caught her in his arms, and his mother murmured with satisfaction that that was the way she liked to hear them talk.

And outside, the committee, smiling blandly over the successful outcome of its high-handed diplomacy, adjourned to "Bob's Place," fittingly though modestly to celebrate its great moral victory.



A decorative border of stylized flowers and vines surrounds the text.

ON MARRYING

By Charles Battell Loomis

ONE of the obvious disadvantages of marrying very late in life is the danger that you'll never have any grandchildren to coddle and grow foolish over.

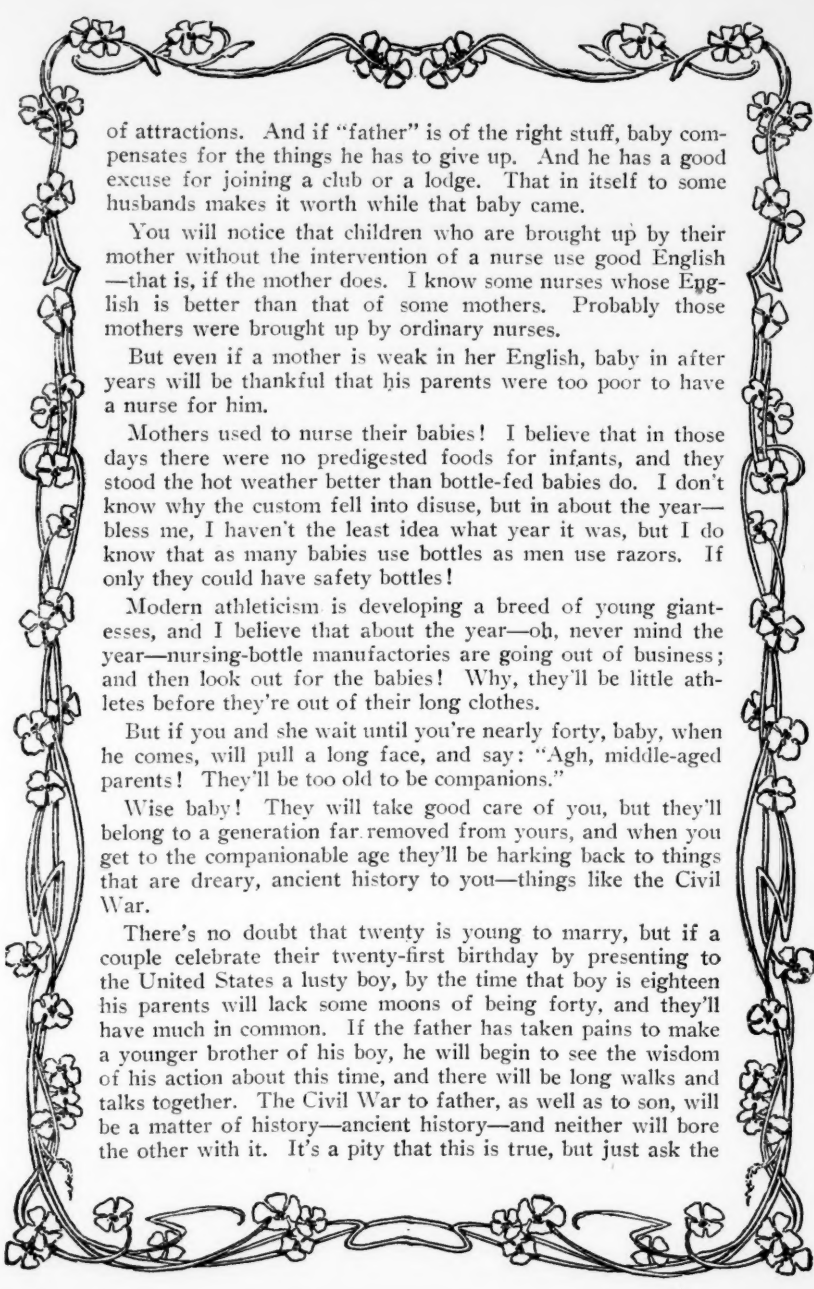
You of twenty-four who are waiting until your income is five thousand dollars before you ask Her if She'll do you the honor to help you spend it, may laugh at this possible contingency as the matter of which dreams are made, but I tell you that when a married man or woman passes the half-century mark, he begins to see the advantages of grandchildren. He has—or should have—let up a little in his mad quest for a Rockefeller fortune, and be willing to take things easy. Not that you can take grandchildren easy—they are generally the cause of a good many anxious hours. But, after all, they aren't your children, and you can afford to shift the responsibilities that belong to a parent to your son or your daughter while you treat them as human beings.

Now, if you wait until you're thirty-five or forty before marrying, you are more than likely to die the month before your first grandchild is born, and he'll never know what it is to have a doting grandparent, while you'll have missed half the fun of life.

Of course, in order to have grandchildren you must have children; there are no pleasures without certain accompanying responsibilities, and children are a great care.

I don't like to exaggerate, but I have known mothers—faithful mothers, I mean—who have actually denied themselves bridge, theater, church going, little pleasure trips with "father," and no one knows how many other things, just because a baby "happened" along, and, having appeared on the scene, demanded constant care.

Some women do not develop mother love until the boy or the girl has put in his appearance. If no child had come that wife would never have known what she was missing. But, once there, once in her arms, its homely little face once covered with kisses, and she's in the game for all it is worth. No need to sympathize with her unduly because she has been forced to give up the theater and all the other pleasures of early married life—without children. Her child is a whole theaterful



of attractions. And if "father" is of the right stuff, baby compensates for the things he has to give up. And he has a good excuse for joining a club or a lodge. That in itself to some husbands makes it worth while that baby came.

You will notice that children who are brought up by their mother without the intervention of a nurse use good English—that is, if the mother does. I know some nurses whose English is better than that of some mothers. Probably those mothers were brought up by ordinary nurses.

But even if a mother is weak in her English, baby in after years will be thankful that his parents were too poor to have a nurse for him.

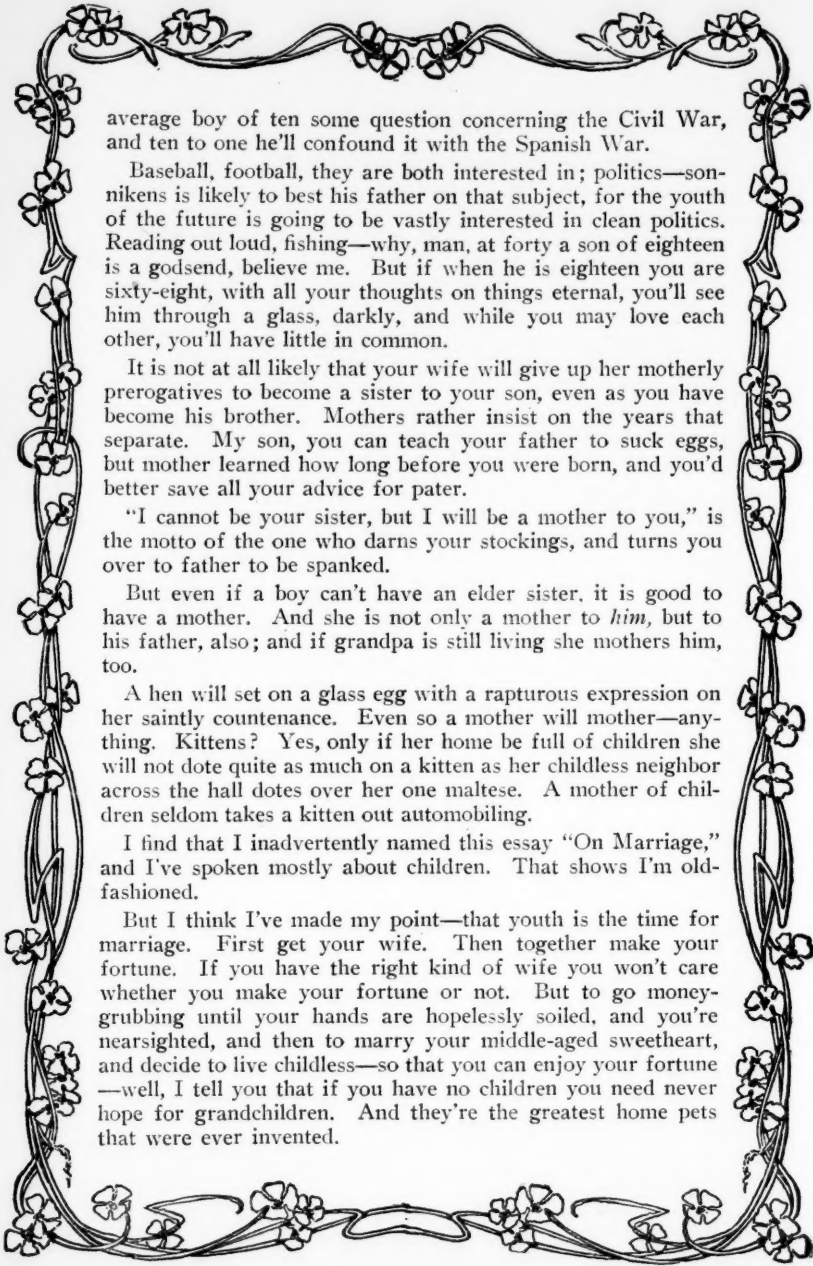
Mothers used to nurse their babies! I believe that in those days there were no predigested foods for infants, and they stood the hot weather better than bottle-fed babies do. I don't know why the custom fell into disuse, but in about the year—bless me, I haven't the least idea what year it was, but I do know that as many babies use bottles as men use razors. If only they could have safety bottles!

Modern athleticism is developing a breed of young giantesses, and I believe that about the year—oh, never mind the year—nursing-bottle manufactories are going out of business; and then look out for the babies! Why, they'll be little athletes before they're out of their long clothes.

But if you and she wait until you're nearly forty, baby, when he comes, will pull a long face, and say: "Agh, middle-aged parents! They'll be too old to be companions."

Wise baby! They will take good care of you, but they'll belong to a generation far removed from yours, and when you get to the companionable age they'll be harking back to things that are dreary, ancient history to you—things like the Civil War.

There's no doubt that twenty is young to marry, but if a couple celebrate their twenty-first birthday by presenting to the United States a lusty boy, by the time that boy is eighteen his parents will lack some moons of being forty, and they'll have much in common. If the father has taken pains to make a younger brother of his boy, he will begin to see the wisdom of his action about this time, and there will be long walks and talks together. The Civil War to father, as well as to son, will be a matter of history—ancient history—and neither will bore the other with it. It's a pity that this is true, but just ask the



average boy of ten some question concerning the Civil War, and ten to one he'll confound it with the Spanish War.

Baseball, football, they are both interested in; politics—son-nikens is likely to best his father on that subject, for the youth of the future is going to be vastly interested in clean politics. Reading out loud, fishing—why, man, at forty a son of eighteen is a godsend, believe me. But if when he is eighteen you are sixty-eight, with all your thoughts on things eternal, you'll see him through a glass, darkly, and while you may love each other, you'll have little in common.

It is not at all likely that your wife will give up her motherly prerogatives to become a sister to your son, even as you have become his brother. Mothers rather insist on the years that separate. My son, you can teach your father to suck eggs, but mother learned how long before you were born, and you'd better save all your advice for pater.

"I cannot be your sister, but I will be a mother to you," is the motto of the one who darns your stockings, and turns you over to father to be spanked.

But even if a boy can't have an elder sister, it is good to have a mother. And she is not only a mother to *him*, but to his father, also; and if grandpa is still living she mothers him, too.

A hen will set on a glass egg with a rapturous expression on her saintly countenance. Even so a mother will mother—anything. Kittens? Yes, only if her home be full of children she will not dote quite as much on a kitten as her childless neighbor across the hall dotes over her one maltese. A mother of children seldom takes a kitten out automobiling.

I find that I inadvertently named this essay "On Marriage," and I've spoken mostly about children. That shows I'm old-fashioned.

But I think I've made my point—that youth is the time for marriage. First get your wife. Then together make your fortune. If you have the right kind of wife you won't care whether you make your fortune or not. But to go money-grubbing until your hands are hopelessly soiled, and you're nearsighted, and then to marry your middle-aged sweetheart, and decide to live childless—so that you can enjoy your fortune—well, I tell you that if you have no children you need never hope for grandchildren. And they're the greatest home pets that were ever invented.



One of the officers growled out something about its being better than the streets.

The Guerdon of the Christmas Baby

By Nalbro Bartley

Author of "The Tinsel Queen," "The Buddha and the Birthday Cake," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. EMMETT OWEN

CHRISTMAS EVE roll call at Number Three police station was informally brief. Bundles containing presents for the officers' families were piled on the usually empty chairs. Twoscore turkeys occupied a long bench in the sunrise courtroom, waiting to be given to the men.

After the files disbanded, the turkeys were distributed, and the desk sergeant said, with a smile:

"Clean blotter to-night! The judge let two box-car bums go with a bit of a calling this morning. It's the poor place to spend Christmas—a police station."

One of the officers, thinking himself mistreated in the way of receiving a lightweight turkey, growled out some-

thing about its being better than the streets. Just then the chimes from the old cathedral next door told them that the children were having their vesper service.

The men plowed their way home through the snowy streets. It was a wet, heavy snow, that clung persistently to one's clothes, and blanketed the buildings and sidewalks.

Meanwhile, the police matron, Mrs. Wilcox, came downstairs, and coyly pinned a sprig of mistletoe over the desk sergeant's head.

"Away with you," said the sergeant, laughing. "It's a fine one I am to be capering around mistletoe."

Mrs. Wilcox looked over the blotter as he spoke.

"Well, there's no poor souls in here,"

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she commented, closing the book. "That's a good old custom—to let every one but a murderer or a thief go free for Christmas."

"Don't be congratulating yourself," said the sergeant mischievously. "There's six hours yet before morning."

He dodged the good-natured slap with which the matron threatened him. Then he whistled softly.

"It's not the most cheerful place to stay in; now, is it, Mrs. Wilcox?"

The woman smoothed her white hair thoughtfully.

"I don't know," she said slowly. "I've been here twenty years, and it looks like home to me. I never think of its being a jail, unless some of the girls takes on extra hard."

"Are you always sorry for them women?" asked the sergeant curiously.

"Always." The white head nodded vigorously. "I'm always sorry, Sergeant Burns. That's why I've held my job for twenty years."

"You think being sorry helps?"

"Think? I know it does. It's what makes many a girl tell the whole truth, and get a fresh start. I never have a woman come in but what I try to get her to talk. And I never abuse her confidence, either."

There was a solemnity about the matron's voice which contrasted with her good-natured pleasantries.

"Well, women is women," commented the sergeant, lighting his pipe. "They can always have a little more sorry stuff left for the next one. But with men it's different."

"Men?" The matron's eyes flashed indignation. "If I was the chief, I'd rather handle ten men than one woman—because men turn soft and tell. But a woman, if she loves a man, will die with her boots on. She'll go to the wall smiling, if it lets her partner off. Women are the martyrs, not men."

A phone call took the desk sergeant's attention. Mrs. Wilcox toiled up the worn stairs, shaking her head at the holes in the oilcloth.

"It's an entire doing over this place

needs," she thought, before she entered the women prisoners' quarters.

The empty cells and straight benches seemed lonely. Her own rocking-chair and student lamp beckoned her to sit down, and be comfortable. The pink shawl she was knitting lay on the table beside the lamp; and one of the police reporters, who had been in that afternoon, had pinned a red Christmas bell over the plain pine bureau.

Mrs. Wilcox seated herself, and started knitting. Her thoughts wandered back, past the twenty years of service as a police matron, to when, a young woman with a home of her own, she had been filling Christmas stockings.

Her private phone was ringing. Sergeant Burns downstairs had lost his usually good-natured air.

"Mrs. Wilcox, get ready for a tough customer," was what she heard. "It's Nell Fargo. They've nabbed her at the station."

The pink shawl was put aside. A heavy key unlocked the first cell door, and a pair of faded gray army blankets were laid across the bare cot. Impulsively, the matron took the Christmas bell down, and started to tack it over the iron door. Then she stopped. She had handled Nell Fargo before.

Outside, the snow had turned to a cutting blizzard, and the wind from the lake was rising. Throngs of late Christmas shoppers were hurrying past. Children with their parents, groups of young people out for a frolic, old men and women, trying to slip back into the childlike spirit of Christmas. The matron watched them wistfully. They were happy, carefree, Christmas patriots, who knew nothing of the terrors of crime. While Nell Fargo, confidence woman, forger, thief, was coming to spend the holiday at Number Three.

Two officers brought her upstairs. They shoved her into the matron's room, and gave Mrs. Wilcox a knowing wink. Then they ran down the rickety stairs, laughing over some surprise one of their children was expecting.

Nell Fargo stripped off her expen-

sive fur coat, and started to undress. She was accustomed to the method of searching. Mrs. Wilcox nodded hullo to her as she opened the pine bureau and selected a nightgown.

"Back again?" she said.

"No fault of mine," the woman answered.

"There's no use searching you, Nell. I don't suppose you've got any goods. You always were slick about that."

"Just as you like."

The woman took off her silk waist, and the white, rounded arms and neck showed signs of heavy finger marks.

"Kill-em-quick Johnny been beating you, has he?" asked the matron soberly. "I thought you broke with him, Nell?"

She did not answer, as she went on undressing, keeping her eyes lowered. The heavy braids of burnished copper hair shone under the electric lights, and the long brown lashes trembled occasionally.

Presently Nell Fargo admitted she was ready for bed.

"Nobody else pulled in?" she asked, in a listless, contralto voice.

"No, thank God," said the matron. "The judge lets everybody that can stay free till after Christmas."

Nell Fargo laughed.

"Except vicious people, that have to be locked up for fear they bite."

She laughed again. Its hollowness jarred on Mrs. Wilcox.

"You better get to bed, Nell. You'll have to be up for sunrise court."

"No, I won't. I'm only a suspect, passing through town."

Mrs. Wilcox watched her supple, graceful figure entering the narrow cell. She locked the door after her, and turned on the alarm light outside. There was something about Nell Fargo's imperial manner that compelled the police matron to treat her with respect. Nell had been well educated, the detectives said.

Again work was begun on the pink shawl. Toots of horns and sleighbells outside made the matron creep to the window to watch the almost indistinct forms jostling through the snowbanks.

"Thank God for Christmas!" she said, as she watched a load of Christmas trees being taken into the cathedral back door. "It makes the whole world happy for a bit."

The outside of the old, gray church was strung with electric bulbs, making a peculiar blurring light in the heavy storm. Great branches of pines and evergreens were over the middle doorway, and a constant stream of people passed in and out. Already the famous chimes were tuning softly, and the matron, leaning against the barred window, heard them play the first of "Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem."

An exclamation of pain sounded from Nell Fargo's cell. The matron went to the iron door, and peered inside. Her prisoner lay on one side, the heavy braids tumbling over her white arms. Her regular, almost classic features were twitching nervously. She moaned, as she brushed aside one of the heavy braids. "A-ah!" was all she said. But the matron's heart quivered in sympathy.

"Nell, are you cold?" she asked timidly, fearful lest she wake her.

The woman did not answer. "A-ah!" was all she said, as she sobbed in her sleep. Outside, the silver chimes tolled a solemn amen.

"Why do there have to be police stations, and prisoners, and sin?" questioned the matron, leaning against the cell door. "Why do there have to be such things?"

Then the irony of her twenty years of livelihood as a keeper of sins' victims made her smile, as she turned away, unanswered.

This was Nell Fargo's fifth visit to police headquarters. From her first debut to a police cell, the woman had steadily, stubbornly, grown bolder in the field of crime. Where once she played with hundreds, now she jostled with thousands. Whether it be New York, San Francisco, Cairo, Paris, London, Florence, Nell Fargo was known to the authorities. She was referred to as the cleverest woman thief in the civilized world. Her regal, almost haughty carriage, and her beauty



Two officers brought her upstairs, and shoved her into the matron's room.

made the hardened judges and officers whistle in amazement. The matron, sitting with her pink shawl in her hands, reflected about the woman. She had been a very young girl, when she was first caught in connection with the Harvey stock deal. She had trembled as the matron's trained hands examined her.

The next time she came to Number Three, there were dark circles under the tawny brown eyes, and she made no resistance to any of the questions put to her. After that, the pink and white complexion faded, the eyes were worn and jaded looking, and heavy lines lay across the once smooth forehead. Still the regal carriage and tall, graceful figure remained unchanged. Still Nell Fargo forged ahead, through the mire of the courts and the taint of the jails.

The matron dropped a stitch as she thought of it. The phone rang again.

Reluctantly she took down the receiver.

"Mrs. Wilcox," said the desk sergeant, "Dick Waller's wife is coming up to you; she's held on suspicion with Waller's Chicago confidence deal. He's nabbed—he put her on the train to go to her mother. We ain't dead sure, but we've got to hold her."

Another plain gown was extracted from the pine bureau, and another cold, uninviting cell was opened, and the alarm light overhead turned on.

"Merry Christmas!" came a chorus of young voices just outside.

"Merry Christmas!" answered the cathedral chimes, as if they understood.

"A-ah!" sighed Nell Fargo, as she touched the bruised arm in her sleep.

"Here she is," said a plain-clothes man outside.

"This way," the matron told Mary Waller wearily.

"I've never been arrested before," sobbed the girl hysterically, clinging to the matron's dress. "I've never been arrested before. I don't know what to do—I was on my way to my mother and—"

The matron looked at her sharply. The slender little figure was hidden in a heavy ulster. A small turban covered the curly black hair, and her frightened Irish, blue eyes filled with tears, as she stared about the detention room.

"There's nothing to be frightened about," the matron told her. "You won't be hurt. Just take off your things and get to bed. I'm not going to bother searching you."

A gasp of relief came from the other.

"I'm so cold," she said, half to herself. "So cold!"

The matron turned to the pine bureau.

"Want something hot?" she asked, almost tenderly.

The girl shook her head.

"No—it's just fright—it's so strange, so horrible. Besides, it's Christmas Eve, and I'm expecting—"

"Merry Christmas!" chimed the cathedral bells.

"Oh, my God!" sobbed the girl, as she saw the opened cell and narrow bed.

"Just you go to sleep," the matron answered easily. "And forget you're where you are. You don't need to tell me anything about anybody. I'm not going to question you. Just go to sleep and rest."

The girl's cold hand clutched the matron's.

"Who—is—that?" she said, her trembling lips stumbling over the words.

"That's another poor soul, sound asleep, and not likely to waken. Go to sleep, Mary Waller. It'll be a merrier Christmas for you, if you do. Don't worry; everything will come out all right."

The matron let the girl undress in her cell. Instinctively, she turned her back, as she knelt down to say her prayer. Criminal or no, Mary Waller was a lady.

The pink shawl looked inviting no longer. The matron slipped off her dress, preparing to sleep. After she heard regular breathing from Mary Waller's cell, she turned the key in the door. It would have been cruel to have locked her in there while panic-stricken.

Downstairs came occasional bursts of laughter from the men, who were sitting about, jossing each other, telling of Christmas trees, and Christmas shoppers, and Christmas celebrations, boasting whose wife could best cook the turkey, and what was the surprise in the bulky bundle on the back stairs.

Officers of the law no longer—merely men, waiting eagerly for their dismissal from duty, that they might make merry with their own.

Upstairs, Nell Fargo turned restlessly in her sleep, now sobbing, now sighing. The matron dozed heavily, her hands folded passively at her side. The girl in the other cell sat up in bed

suddenly. She stretched out her hands in the dark. The cunning placing of the alarm light left the prisoner in darkness, the keeper in bright light.

"Dick," she whispered. "Dick, wake up—stupid! I think, dear, I think—"

A roar of laughter answered her. The hardness of the cot, the coarse linen, the bars—ah, the iron bars drove home the truth. She remembered now. The ride in the patrol, the awful, horrible truth—and no one knew her secret—no one even suspected—

A frightful pain shot through her body. Moaning submissively, she tried to endure. Another writhing pain took possession to torture her. What was it outside they were saying? "Merry Christmas?" Were those church bells?

Presently the pains became continuous, merciless in their agony. Her forehead was dripping wet, and her small hands were uplifted, knotted, as she tried to cry out for help. Dick, Dick, Dick! He had never failed her before. He had sent her home, hoping she would reach there in time. He had known what was to happen to him. She knew his secret, she would die before she would tell. And—he—knew—hers.

Oh, the pain, the pain! If only some one would hear. The faint snore of the police matron could be detected, and the restless tossing of the woman in the next cell.

Her tongue was thick, swollen, dry; outside came a wild jangle of bells, horns tooted, and sleighs flew by. The girl on the prison cot lay passive, half unconscious.

Suddenly, from without, came the chorus of the cathedral choir boys making their procession around the outside of the church. In another ten minutes solemn high mass would be celebrated. It would be Christmas, and all the world would be attune with the Christ Child spirit.

Christmas! Downstairs the men listened respectfully to the choir boys as they sang in their high, unaccompanied voices:

"Once in royal David's city,
 Stood a lowly cattle shed;
 Where a mother laid her baby,
 In a manger for His bed,
 Mary was that mother mild,
 Jesus Christ that little child."

Still the pain. The woman in the other cell had wakened. She was listening to the girl's low moans. She crept, in her white gown, to the door of the locked cell, and shook the bars, trying to rouse the matron. Now the boy choristers were singing:

"He came down to earth from heaven,
 Who is God and Lord of all,
 And His shelter was a stable,
 And His cradle was a stall.
 With the poor, and mean, and lowly,
 Lived on earth our Savior holy."

A quivering, hopeless cry came from the girl prisoner's lips. Nell Fargo's eyes closed as they heard it. There was no mistaking the meaning of that sound. Downstairs, all was silent. Still the boys sang:

"For He is our childhood's pattern,
 Day by day, like us He grew.
 He was little, weak, and helpless,
 Tears and smiles like us He knew.
 And He feebleth for our sadness,
 And He shareth in our gladness."

Oh, the agony of the cross! Could it compare to this? The matron was roused, as Nell Fargo rattled the iron bars defiantly. Down the long, bare stairs was wafted the faintest, mournful wail—a prophetic, solemn sound.

Every man in the station house started to his feet, as he heard it. The matron, dazed from sleep, stumbled to her feet. The wail grew louder, triumphant, lusty. It lost its spiritual interpretation. The choir boys had entered the cathedral now. Faintly, their long amen sounded.

The cry penetrated again to the downstairs. The matron, half asleep, unlocked the cell. Nell Fargo swore at her for her tardiness. The girl lay in an unconscious stupor, trembling little sighs coming from her pain-parched lips. Only the unmistakable, feeble cry of the newborn child broke the silence.

Sergeant Burns paused on the stair landing, and whispered to the boys:

"By God! It's a Christmas baby!"

"Peace on earth, good will toward men," rang the cathedral chimes, vibrant with meaning. The intonation of the midnight mass began, the organ pealing forth the grand old music of the Catholic church.

Nell Fargo covered her ears, trying to shut out the helpless cry of the Christmas baby.

After the first spasm of excitement, the men downstairs looked at each other sheepishly, half ashamed of their womanish display of emotion.

Mrs. Wilcox, her usual poise shaken, ran down to the desk sergeant.

"You aren't going to keep that child now, are you?" she asked excitedly. "Think of her being in a police station with a new baby! And such a fine little fellow he is!"

"She's Dick Waller's wife," the desk sergeant told her with a pointed calmness. "And she's a suspect. Dick Waller was in this last deal with a woman. It's likely, isn't it, that she's his wife?"

Mrs. Wilcox wrung her hands in distress.

"It's horrible," she sobbed. "To see her lying up on the narrow cot of a Christmas morning, with that wee baby beside her, and knowing that she's got to go to court, and be sent to jail—to say nothing of the baby being taken to an institution!"

A murmur of sympathy from the officers met her anxious gaze.

"Ain't there any men here?" demanded the matron hot-headedly. "Oh, you're a fine pack—every one of you with kids of your own! Suppose your wife was in a police station—on Christmas day—with a newborn child?"

"Does Waller know she's taken?" asked a detective.

"Not yet; but he's going down for a long term. This girl was on her way to her mother. You see, he knew the game was up."

"What makes men drag women into such things?" asked the matron passionately. "Ain't they satisfied to black their own records, without branding a girl? Look at the institutions—filled with babies like the Christmas boy up-

stairs. What chance has he got? What hope is there left him?"

The chime of bells outside rang softly. Disheartened, Mrs. Wilcox turned away, and started back upstairs.

"I'm sorry," said the desk sergeant thoughtfully, a heavy furrow showing across his freckled forehead. "If it was Nell Fargo now—that would be a different matter. We wouldn't care."

The matron paused on the landing.

"Yes," she said bitterly, "that's so. You'll let her go with a judge's reprimand, knowing she's bad at the very heart of her, but you'll take little Mary Waller, and put her behind the bars with her newborn baby outside, crying for her. You let criminals like Nell Fargo grow fat, while you crush innocent girls, and make degenerates out of their offspring!"

The matron was crying unashamedly. The men moved uneasily in their chairs. They dreaded to hear the faint baby cry again; it awoke something deep within them that whispered possibilities of guilty treason.

"It's love that put her where she is," said the desk sergeant to the matron. "She was Dick's wife, and she did what he told her."

"Love," repeated the matron slowly. "Then it's love that all good people should keep away from."

She turned, and went up to the women's quarters.

Nell Fargo, released from her cell, had been making the young mother as comfortable as the bare rooms would permit. She held the Christmas baby in her white arms, looking at it with a savage tenderness. The matron watched her curiously, as she listened to her sob over the tiny, warm body.

The station physician believed in keeping Christmas as a holiday. He was not going to be roused from his comfortable bed for any woman prisoner. A young medical student would call over in the morning to see what was needed. So little Mary Waller was cared for by police matron and woman thief. By and by she asked for her baby, and they held up the little bald head, that she might gently place her lips against it.

"Don't it beat hell?" said Nell Fargo to the matron.



And the matron, with a sudden suspicion of the truth, came up, and kissed her on the cheek.

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"I'm glad," said Dick Waller. "And I'm coming out of here a square man."

"Downstairs, they tell me love got her into this," the matron answered. "Love——"

"Who is she?"

The matron told the case. Nell's eyes narrowed—the way they did when the judge was trying her out on a mild third degree.

"And you think she'll be sent down?"

"Of course. They'll send the child to an institution."

Nell's eyes narrowed again.

"An institution raised me," she said briefly.

"I'm going to get her another blanket. You watch her, Nell."

The woman nodded. Her heavy copper braids fell gracefully over the

coarse white gown, the black and blue marks on the delicate arms showing plainly in the glaring light.

She knelt beside the cot to whisper: "Do you want anything, Mary Waller?"

The little black head nodded.

"What—will—they—do—with—me?"

Nell hesitated.

"What did you have to do with the deal?" she asked boldly. "Tell me—trust me! Are you guilty?"

The quick tick of the matron's alarm clock seemed to fill the room with its noise. Presently, the white lips whispered:

"Yes—I did it for Dick—it didn't seem—so—very—wrong."

The baby whined faintly. Nell bent over to put her cheek on his small one.

"My boy's mother—a criminal!" The girl seemed to choke. Tears rolled from beneath the black lashes. "They—will—take him away—from me!"

Nell's face worked nervously. Her usually quiet hands were interlocked, as if in pain.

"Kid," she whispered, "you didn't know what you were doing, you did it because Dick Waller told you. I know. Who wouldn't know, if I didn't?"

Again the feeble whisper interrupted: "Dick was sending me to mother. He wanted me out of the way in case—he—was taken—he——"

"I know, I know! But listen, you see what's going to happen? They'll send you down with Dick. They'll take the boy away, and put him in a school of correction. My God, you can't let that baby go to an institution. They'll make him a thief, if he's a saint by nature!"

Again the loud ticking of the clock. Downstairs, the rattle of dice and

chairs. Outside, Christmas bells and the howling wind.

"Don't let them—take him——"

Nell Fargo looked at the baby, curled within the guarding mother arm. She gave a long, gulping sigh.

"I'm going to take your place, Mary Waller. I'm going to say Dick and I were intimate, that we hatched the deal, and you were leaving him. Listen, hear me out. I'm going to send the Christmas baby into the world with a clean slate. I'm only a suspect case, a derelict, drifting to the four corners. The boys know me. They'd tell you I'm a bad actor, and that there isn't anything I wouldn't do, if there was money enough in it. Don't you see, Mary Waller, it's the only thing? Look at me! I'm a bad woman. You're young, you've got to live to be the mother of that boy. You've got to make him the sort of man his father should have been.

"What have I got? What's a prison term to me? Nothing. Honest, kiddie, I don't care. I never gave anybody anything that was worth while yet. I want to give myself to the Christmas baby."

The matron's step was heard on the stairs. The girl on the cot grasped Nell's strong hand.

"You—will do this?" she asked eagerly. "For my baby? I know I shouldn't let you—but it means so much, so much!"

"S-sh! Let me tell the matron. Just lie still, and listen. It'll work out without a hitch. You see, you don't know how bad I am. There isn't a court or a judge in the country but what would send you to jail, and let me go free, if the facts were known. That's *law*. But every mother's son of them would say you had the right to liberty, and me to prison fare. Let me give myself to the Christmas baby."

"I love you," murmured the girl. "You've given my baby a chance."

The woman sobbed, a dry, bitter sob.

"It's the first time I ever gave anybody a chance," she said.

The matron was entering the room. Nell rose from the floor.

"Mrs. Wilcox," she said quietly, "I'm not as yellow as you think. This kid is innocent. I'm Dick Waller's pal. She was leaving him—because of me. I hatched the deal he's being held for. The girl is out of it."

The matron smiled. She could not shut out the sudden joy in her face. Nell, seeing it, winced. She realized how glad they would be. Not one would wish it were different. The years—the empty, staring, horrible years to come—rose up before her.

The matron, her voice young again, passed into the girl's cell.

"Never mind, my lamb," she whispered. "It'd take a pretty hard character not to weaken." And she looked at Nell reproachfully.

Nell remained standing, looking at the matron sullenly, her face white, like chiseled marble.

"I did it for the boy," was all she said. "If love brought her this, love is going to take it away."

And the matron, with a sudden suspicion of the truth, came up, and kissed her on the cheek.

"I'm glad," was the men's comment. "That's the way it should have ended. Nell Fargo and Dick Waller—some pair. And the kid with her baby is going home to her mother, to begin again."

"I'm glad," said the judge inwardly, as he sentenced Nell Fargo in the Chicago court. "It's good that Dick Waller's wife and boy are left unsmirched."

"I'm glad," said Dick Waller, as he stopped in his breaking stone in the prison yard. "And I'm coming out of here a square man. That boy is going to have a father he'll be proud of."

The matron, long after, remembered, and repeated that she was glad. She said it with a smile for Mary and her baby, and a sigh for Nell Fargo.

"I'm glad," Mary Waller whispered to her boy, a dozen times a day. "But I couldn't have done the same."

"I'm glad," was the refrain in Nell Fargo's heart, as she sat in the brush shops, dressed in stripes. "And Mary Waller's baby must be walking now!"

FOR REWARD of SERVICE



By
GRACE KEON

Author of
"Joy in the Valley," etc.

ILLUSTRATED
BY
SIGURD SCHOU

LITTLE Mr. Allison pushed his hair out of his eyes. Not that he had much hair—none at all to spare, in fact, and hardly enough to cover his head; but when he grew excited this one long lock would insist on straying down whether he liked it or no.

Little Mr. Allison was somewhat of a nonentity. He was only about five feet four inches from the ground, he had a small face with a puttylike complexion, a sandy-white mustache, and hair that, once red, was now turning white in undignified fashion. Large, round, pale-blue eyes completed the rather unattractive ensemble—eyes that peered forth into a world of which he saw little more than that which came into direct line of vision, and the huge disks of spectacles, mounted in nickel that had tarnished with age, gave the finishing touches to his grotesque appearance.

There were some clever young chaps in the office of which Mr. Allison was head bookkeeper, clever, and giddy, and

willing, with the thoughtlessness of young blood, to poke fun at any one or anything. One of their number, humming a popular song, seemed to find in it an apt designation for the inoffensive old fellow, and dubbed him "Moon Face." The great glasses he wore made the name unhappily appropriate, and presently all the lighter element used no other.

The fact that it was the day before Christmas, and that holiday excitement made the air fairly tingle, did not keep Mr. Allison from his weary pursuit of an elusive nickel which had disappeared somewhere or other in the course of his final reckoning of accounts. The hubbub of the office did not disturb him in the least, although one incident of the day had seemed to upset his usual calm; and it was perhaps due to this incident that his totals would not match.

Mr. Brettison had gone home quite early, informing his staff before he went that there would be a cessation of work two hours earlier that afternoon,

in consideration of the season. Which was a good deal for Mr. Brettison, the soul of justice and the shred of magnanimity. Mr. Brettison had grown very red in the face when one venturesome spirit, a late addition to the office, jumped up with outstretched hand and wished his employer a Merry Christmas. Mr. Brettison did not believe in familiarity. He treated his employees like machines, and with such encouragement they acted like machines. He was not paying for brains or initiative, he said—he could supply both. He did, too—to the usual disadvantage.

But this venturesome lad, the red-cheeked, brown-eyed, curly-headed chap, who had first given Christopher Allison that appropriate title, broke the ice. The "youngsters," as they were called, followed his example, and diffidently, in fact with some embarrassment, the older men advanced one by one to shake Mr. Brettison's hand, while the latter, stirred out of his usual iciness, smiled and nodded, with an expression that seemed to make a different man of him. Even McCarthy, who was a shade more familiar with Mr. Brettison than his fellows, since his line took him into more personal contact with the man, had seldom seen so pleasant, so human a look on his face.

Christopher Allison, fumbling, embarrassed, nervous, was the last to give him greeting. Claspings the cold, thin fingers in his, and looking down from his greater height upon him, Mr. Brettison suddenly remembered his bookkeeper's existence.

"Mr. Allison," he said, "it strikes me you've been with us a good many years."

"Forty-one years the fifteenth of last August, sir," said Christopher Allison quietly.

"Forty-one years! As long as that! How old are you?"

"Sixty-two, sir. I cast my first vote the same year I came to work for your father."

"You astonish me. You're not an old man yet, Allison. I suppose you've got a well-grown family by this time? I heard something about two of your sons——"

Mr. Brettison's mouth shut suddenly and sharply, his face clouded over, and he dropped his bookkeeper's hand. Allison, being naturally pasty of color, could not change much. Still, his lips trembled a little as he turned away without saying a word. And Mr. Brettison withdrew—it seemed with precipitation.

"Forty-one years! Whee-ee-ump-ee!" whistled Will Carroll, the young man whom McCarthy called "Mr. Too Previous." "If I were here forty-one years, I'd want my name over the door."

"Maybe he'll retire old Moon Face on a pension," said another.

"More likely he'll discover that he's outlived his usefulness and put one of you fresh young guys in his place," growled McCarthy—McCarthy, in spite of his name, the office grouch.

Discipline, however, relaxed for the rest of that day. When Allison could see clearly, he found himself on his high stool, with little knowledge of how he got there. The five "youngsters" had their heads together, called into conference by Will Carroll, to explain some scheme of his with great gusto. Suppressed guffaws could be heard at various intervals, especially after the wrapping and tying of mysterious-looking packages, each package being stored under the long mailing table until such time as it was needed.

About half past two, a long sigh from Christopher Allison announced the fact that he had at last been able to straighten out the tangle. He began to close his books and arrange the papers on his desk. McCarthy, stooping to pick up a pencil, noticed that one of the "youngsters" was approaching Allison's desk, carrying a huge parcel. He swung around in his chair to watch and listen.

"In appreciation of your kindness to us, Mr. Allison," began Will Carroll, with great solemnity, "and in commemoration of your long service, I beg to present you with this turkey—the finest ten-pounder we could get our hands on. With the compliments of the staff, Mr. Allison, and a Merry Christmas."



"Forty-one years the fifteenth of last August, sir," said Christopher Allison quietly.

Mr. Allison peered up through his glasses at the rosy-cheeked lad, whose eyes were dancing.

"Why—er—er—" he began.

"And here is some candy for the children," said Will Carroll, taking a square white package from the young man right behind him. There were three others who had formed into line—each with a package—at Mr. Allison's desk, but Will Carroll was the spokesman. "If you haven't children of your own give it to somebody else's."

"Er—" said Mr. Allison.

"And this is a real, imported English plum pudding," he continued, taking the second package from the second young man.

"And this is a box of candied fruit, which we are sure Mrs. Allison will appreciate."

"Why—er—er—" again stuttered Christopher Allison.

"And this is a small gift which I may not mention—just a little memento of the happy occasion," pursued the young man. "We have but one request to make."

The dim blue eyes sought his face anxiously.

"Do not open these until to-morrow morning. And now, boys, altogether: 'Merry Christmas to you, Mr. Allison!'"

There was a dead silence after the ring-

ing young voices had joined in the cheerful words.

"Why—why—" began Allison. His lips were trembling, his long, nervous fingers shaking. "I—I—can't say how I appreciate this, gentlemen. I can't, really. My wife will be so—so pleased—so astonished—so—I—am overwhelmed. I never—dreamed—you young chaps knew of my existence, except on pay day." He tried to laugh, but failed miserably. "I—didn't—really. And here—why—" He took off his glasses quickly, and wiped the tears from his eyes in a hurried, shame-faced fashion. "It makes me feel—"

The words choked in his throat. He swallowed several times, and then straightened up, while a light sprang into his face.

"Won't you call to-morrow—just for

a bite of these good things? Mrs. Allison will be delighted to welcome you. She's a great cook—the finest in the land—and the job she'll make of this turkey—I won't take no, boys—I want you to come. Drop in if just for a few minutes."

Again his voice failed him. The young men stood watching him with fascinated eyes. He reached for his coat, and one of them recovered sufficiently to help him on with it, and also to store away the smaller packages in the large pockets, so that his hands were free to take the big turkey.

"A Merry Christmas!" he said then, a happy light in his pale-blue eyes. "A Merry Christmas to you—to everybody!"

He raised his voice; and the other men, looking up at him, nodded return greetings. And then the old book-keeper left the office with a quicker step and a happier heart than he had had in many a long day.

All prepared to follow him speedily. McCarthy, the grouch, reached for his hat; and then, while wrapping a black silk handkerchief tightly and carefully about his throat, he broke a silence that had in some unaccountable way fallen over the office.

"Say, you young cubs," he began pleasantly, "it isn't often I'd acknowledge that you could teach me anything. But you've made me feel like a darned fool, and I'm good and well ashamed of myself."

Five whisk brooms were poised in air, and five young men turned toward McCarthy inquiringly.

"There's poor old Ally been working with us year in and year out, and not one of us old fellows ever did him a single kind turn. And here you chaps get in on us. You've made him the happiest man in creation to-night. Great Scott, that's something! And for poor old Ally! Poor—old—Ally! Why, Ally's the best—— And he's got the best woman I've ever met. Don't happen to know anything about Ally's affairs, do you?"

"He certainly doesn't look like a chap with a history," said Carroll, in an irri-

tated voice. A shadow seemed to have fallen on the mischievous, boyish countenance.

"He has, and a sad one. Mr. Brettison—did you hear the break Brettison made? Bet he could have kicked himself."

"What for?"

"Oh, just for foolishness. He didn't remember until he had forgotten."

"Oh, go on! You're talking rot. Allison's no fellow to have any mystery connected with him."

"I didn't say mystery—I said history—and you'll hardly believe it at that. He and his wife are all alone in the world, though they had six children. They didn't lose them when they were babies, either, or through any family weakness. Every one of the six lived to be young men and women. Two boys were drowned out boating. The third son saved a little girl at a fire—the papers were full of it fifteen years ago—and was killed. One of the daughters died when her first child was born, and took the child with her. The second met a worthless scamp of a fellow and ran away with him. She was too proud to appeal to the old folks, and when they found her, neglect and starvation had sent her into consumption. The last, the youngest, and one of the prettiest girls I ever saw, studied too hard, and her brain gave way. For her death they thanked God."

"Good Lord!" said Will Carroll, and his red cheeks grew quite pale. He sat down on the edge of his desk weakly, staring at the man. "Why, it's—it's unbelievable—it's horrible! I never heard the like in all my life."

"Neither did I. I doubt if there is another similar case in the world. And here that old chap's been plugging away at that desk before any of us were born, bringing up his children and losing them, and suffering in silence. And it's up to a lot of young familiars like you to appreciate him and give him a bit of happiness. I tell you what, Clarke," said the office grouch, turning to one of the men standing near him, "we are old fogies, all right. But we'll reform."

"You can bet we will," said Clarke

firmly. "I'm sorry you boys didn't let us in on that."

Carroll gave a long sigh.

"We wanted to do it ourselves," he said. Then quietly: "We thought poor old Moon Face wasn't getting half a square deal."

"Well, good afternoon, boys."

"Good afternoon, Mr. McCarthy. A Merry Christmas!"

"Same to you, same to you, Mr. Too Previous. Yours will be all the merrier for what you have done this day."

Christopher Allison deposited his bundles on the table in the cheerful sitting room, and, taking off his thick woolen gloves, blew on his fingers, which were numb with the cold.

"And what in the world might you have there, Christopher Allison," called a pleasant voice, "that's taking you with all the snow on your feet into the best room we have in the house?"

"I wiped 'em off carefully, Sue," answered her husband, glancing down guiltily, nevertheless. "And I wanted to hide some things from you so as you wouldn't see them," he added, as she came into the room and stood looking in amazement at the packages he had placed on the table.

"Good mercy, Chris Allison! Where'd you get 'em?"

"The boys gave them to us—the young chaps! They're Christmas presents for you'n me! A turkey! Candy! A pudding! Fruit! And there's a surprise in this little box. But none of 'em are to be opened till to-morrow. They made me promise, Sue."

"Oh, well," regretfully, "if you promised—What's in that great big one, Chris?"

"That's the turkey."

"But they didn't mean you to leave the turkey wrapped up overnight? We'd better open it, Chris."

Christopher Allison looked thoughtful.

"Does seem kind of funny to leave a turkey that way. Guess the boys never thought o' that."

"We'll open that package, then," said

Mrs. Allison energetically. "I can get it ready to-night, Chris."

"Why, yes," said Allison. "Wait until I get my knife, and I'll cut the twine for you. But aren't they the fine boys, Sue? Will Carroll, the one looks so much like our John. And little Weston, with the black hair. And Jim Danby, and Fullerton, and Shaw—they all gave them to me with a Merry Christmas before I left the office. Here's your knife—wait—I'll cut the cord."

He stood a moment with blade poised; then drew back slowly.

"Better not, Sue," he said. "You know I promised, and they mightn't like it, and I wouldn't want to do one thing they didn't like. Supposing they asked, and we'd have to say yes? Better not, Sue."

He took off his glasses, which had steamed up again, and wiped them.

"It nearly broke my heart, Sue. He stood looking at me just like John used to. It nearly did me up. I couldn't speak to 'em, Sue, I couldn't. And I asked them to come in to-morrow. We'll give them something—just some little thing, and I want you awfully to see that Carroll boy. So like John. His hair—you know how it used to crinkle all up. And his eyes dancing! And his red cheeks! Oh, Sue!"

But the mother was weeping. Slow tears coursed down her faded old cheeks; and no one could have called "poor old Ally" uninteresting as he put his arms about her and mingled his tears with hers. Yet they did not weep without hope. Somewhere, some day, the tangled skein of their lives would be disentangled, and they meet their loved ones face to face. And the happiness that brought these sweet tears was beautiful compared with the sorrow, the blacker sorrow, that time had but slowly dulled.

"If they come to-morrow," said Mrs. Allison at last, drying her eyes, and turning with a woman's natural aptitude from sentiment to practical thought, "we will give them dinner. The turkey—bless their hearts!—they've furnished, and the pudding. I

have some pies made, but not half enough. We'll need lots and lots of fixings; and just as soon as you get a bite to eat, Christopher Allison, I'll make out the list for you."

They were like two happy children, hardly able to wait until supper was over to get at the making of the "list," which, in a short space of time, grew to enormous proportions. For Christopher Allison, in his moonings about town, had come to know of a unique store where "men's things" reigned supreme, and where all sorts of useful gifts might be purchased. As soon as they had reached some sort of satisfactory conclusion, Mrs. Allison helped her husband into his greatcoat, and wrapped the muffler about his throat securely, seeing him to the door, then, with many parting injunctions. As he stepped across the threshold, he turned back again to kiss her.

"Honest, Sue, I feel as if I were only twenty-five years old," he said, chuckling. "I feel just as young as you look, dear old lady."

"Well, Chris Allison! Well, Chris Allison!" cried his wife. "You're just as silly! Go on, go on, or I won't let you stir a step outdoors to-night." She watched him as he unlatched the little front gate, stamping through the snow, which by this time was descending heavily. "God bless you, husband, and God bless those dear, dear boys who have made you so happy!" she whispered.

She waited a little while. Night was



"In appreciation of your kindness to us, Mr. Allison," began Will Carroll, with great solemnity.

coming on rapidly, but a faint gray line in the distant sky showed that the day was loath to depart. The whirling flakes of snow dashed into her face.

"A real, old-fashioned Christmas!" she murmured.

Then she closed the door gently; but, instead of going into the kitchen where the unwashed supper dishes called to her tidy soul, she entered the little parlor, and stood looking at the imposing array of parcels. Boys were such lovable things! Poor Christopher had worked with those men in that office year after year, and not one of them would ever do a thing of this sort. Not one! It took just such warm-hearted, big-souled boys to think of it. And again the tears dimmed her eyes.

A faint ring at the bell roused her—the ring of a bell which was touched by a hesitating hand. Christopher, maybe. He had forgotten something. She flew along the little hall and opened the door. The light from within threw the small motherly figure into strong relief. The wrinkled face, with its crown of soft white hair, and the

mild, questioning brown eyes were turned upon the tall young man who stood irresolute on the threshold, his arms laden.

"Oh!" he said. "This Mr. Allison's house?"

"Yes," a little anxiously. "Is anything the matter?"

"Nothing—nothing at all. Mr. Allison at home?"

"Not now; but he'll be back shortly. Won't you come in and wait for him?"

"Oh, thank you, but I haven't the time! You see, Mrs. Allison—you're Mrs. Allison, aren't you?"

"Yes; but come in; come in just for a minute. It's too cold for you—"

"I'll come in, then, for a minute," said the young man. "You see, Mrs. Allison," as he entered, and put his back to the door to shut it, for both hands were fully employed. "My name is Carroll—Will Carroll."

"Oh! Yes, I've heard."

She was gazing at him anxiously, curiously, her faded eyes fastened on that manly young face.

"Well, we boys in the office—you know—we—we gave Mr. Allison a few Christmas remembrances this afternoon."

"Oh, yes! And he is *so* pleased! And so am I," she exclaimed brightly. "If you knew how happy—"

"Then—you haven't opened them yet?" Joy and fear mingled with the question.

"Why, no. You boys said—"

"Oh! Isn't that just fine!" Rapture thrilled through every note. "There's been a little mistake, Mrs. Allison. You see, we did up quite a number of things for other friends this afternoon, and—we had Mr. Allison's all separate, we thought—but when we came to open up—which we did, er—accidentally—we found out to our horror that we'd gotten them pretty well mixed. So we sorted them all over again, and if—if you'll just let me take the ones Mr. Allison brought home and put these in their places, I'll be awfully, awfully obliged to you."

"Why, of course!" cried Mrs. Allison. "They're all in here on the par-

lor table. You can do just as you like with them. And wasn't it too bad to make such an error, Mr. Carroll? And you had to come out to-night, in all this snow—" She was trembling with delight and excitement.

"Oh, it's nothing. I'm overjoyed!" cried the young man; and his joy was unmistakable when he saw the five neatly corded packages standing on the table. "Here are the ones we meant for Mr. Allison." He hastily placed the bundles he was carrying on the nearest chair, and began stuffing the others into his coat pockets. "And that was a silly idea about not opening them until to-morrow. Open them whenever you like, and we'll all be around in the afternoon to see if they pleased you."

He caught up the heavy box which was supposed to contain the turkey.

"This is a bit of cut glass I bought—for my sister," he explained, almost guiltily, for he saw her eyes fastened on it. "Odd how we could do such a stupid thing; but it's Christmas Eve, and I think we were all—well, just rattled, you know," with a boyish grin. He held out his hand as he spoke.

"Mr. Allison is always talking about you," said the old lady tremulously. "And about Weston, and Jim Danby, and Fullerton, and Shaw. You see how I know you all? And he said you were like John—our John. You are—very, very like him. We'll be awfully glad to have you to-morrow, and I'll show you my John's picture, and then you can see for yourself."

Will Carroll got away safely before Christopher Allison's return. When he reached his rooms, four young men rose up as one at his entrance, and turned inquiring faces toward him. They were all there—Weston, and Jim Danby, and Fullerton, and Shaw.

"Better luck than we deserve," he said laconically. "Here is the turkey, drat it!" He threw the box on the floor, and with a well-directed kick sent it flying across the room. "And here's your plum pudding. And your candy. And your fruit. And your surprise." He threw each object from him in turn, and each young man he addressed was

forced to do some swift dodging. "But at least, though we may be fools, we have the luck of the foolish, and our luck was with us this night."

Then he sat down, heaved a tremendous sigh, and wiped a forehead from which the perspiration was pouring.

But Christopher Allison and his wife would not open one of those precious packages until the next morning, when the turkey, and the plum pudding, and the candy were duly exclaimed over. Neither of the unsophisticated couple dreamed how nearly their cup of happiness had been dashed from their lips. The "surprise" proved to be that indeed, from it embodied a handsome scarfpin for Christopher and a neat gold brooch for his wife.

When the young men came in a body on Christmas Day, at three o'clock, they were overwhelmed with thanks. Not only that, but, in spite of all pleading and excuse, the five were forced to sit down to table, since neither host nor hostess would touch a bit of food until their arrival.

And, although every one of those five young men had eaten a hearty dinner, they attacked the good things prepared by Mrs. Allison with a relish that was in keeping with the repast. A more enjoyable meal the two old folk had seldom partaken of. Will Carroll had a most fascinating way of telling a joke or a story, and he strove now, with all his might and main, to keep his listeners in roars of laughter. Appointing himself a "waitress," he was standing at Mrs. Allison's elbow with one of her big

kitchen aprons pinned around his waist, and a napkin resting on top of his curls to serve as a cap, when the doorbell rang.

"Oh, do let me go!" he exclaimed, in a high falsetto; and, amid screams of laughter, he walked with mincing steps down the hallway, and threw open the door.

"Mr. and Mrs. Allison are not at home. Great, suffering snakes!"

Will Carroll's jaw dropped. The screams of laughter were suddenly hushed—for in walked Mr. Brettison and the office grouch.

Neither hesitated an instant. Mr. Brettison proceeded stiffly down the passage, with McCarthy close behind; and Will Carroll was too dumfounded to realize the picture he made, with the white napkin hanging over one ear and



"Oh!" he said. "This Mr. Allison's house?"

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the gingham apron barely reaching to his knees. Mr. Brettison's glance swept the table before he turned to the young man.

"A fine tale I've been hearing—" he began.

"Don't repeat it! At least, not here, Uncle Henry," pleaded the young fellow—at which designation the other members of the party exchanged startled glances. None had been aware of the relationship. "Besides, it's Christmas Day! And you wouldn't shame me before my friends on Christmas Day!"

"Won't you sit down?" began Mr. Allison, in a deprecatory tone. He was utterly bewildered at his employer's appearance on the scene.

"I suppose none of you knew that this rascally young chap was my nephew?" went on Mr. Brettison. "Haven't you any complaint to make against him, Allison?"

"Against Mr. Carroll? . Indeed, no, sir. I did not know—I'm afraid——"

"Oh, go on and sit down, uncle, and taste Mrs. Allison's coffee. She's got your French chef knocked sky high. Pour me out a cup, Mrs. Allison. There, uncle!"

Once more the young man took up his forgotten rôle, and handed the cup of coffee quite elegantly, bobbing a curtsy meanwhile that threatened destruction to the coffee, and caused an involuntary ripple of merriment.

"You see, uncle," he went on, putting his napkin across one arm and adopting the conventional attitude of the waiter, "we all felt that we ought to give Mr. Allison a little Christmas gift as a reward for faithful service—and—well, the oddest mix-up occurred. He got some one else's things, and some one else got his, and so on, et cetera. So I had to come last night and give him his own bundles."

"Oh!" said Brettison, on whom light was beginning to dawn. "So McCarthy was right, then?"

"McCarthy was right, all right," said Will Carroll. "And he put *us* right, too, uncle. McCarthy was the right man in the right place. Three cheers for McCarthy!"

They were given, and three cheers for Mr. Brettison, and for Christopher Allison, and for Mrs. Christopher Allison. During the course of which Mr. Brettison deigned to drink his coffee, and pronounced it splendid. In putting the cup on the table, he placed an envelope beside it.

"I forgot my Christmas gift to you altogether, Allison," he said, with an odd smile. "Lucky that Mr. McCarthy had some papers to bring me last night, or I might never have remembered it. I'll take care of the rest of you young chaps next week. When you are at leisure, Mr. Carroll, I'd like to have a chat with you."

"This evening, sir," said the undaunted young man. "Leave McCarthy with us now—not one of us chaps can sing, and McCarthy's fine. Come on, Mac. Sit down. It's all right, isn't it, Mrs. Allison?"

"Indeed, yes," laughed the good lady in a flutter of pleasure, as the door closed behind Mr. Brettison. "Indeed, yes. But it's odd to discover that you——"

Will Carroll shook his finger at her.

Mr. Brettison's envelope, on being opened, was found to contain a goodly check. It was handed around then, and each one in turn welcomed it with exaggerated rapture. On investigation, McCarthy's voice was found to be all that Will Carroll claimed for it. Bonds of friendship never to be broken were riveted that day between those young folks and the old pair going down the other side of the hill. Even McCarthy—good-hearted, grouchy McCarthy—became congenial beyond the memory of man.

"It was the grandest, grandest day!" said Mrs. Allison, carefully placing her new gold brooch in its satin-lined box.

"One of the grandest," agreed her husband, performing the same office for his new gold pin.

"Dear! I forgot to ask him how his sister liked that bit of cut glass," said Mrs. Allison. "Remind me of it, if I forget, when we see him again."

"I will," said the old man. "I'll ask him myself to-morrow."



THE FIGHTING DOCTOR

By

Helen R. Martin

Author of "Tillie, a Mennonite Maid," "The Crossways," "When Half-Gods Go," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY G. C. FUGSLEY

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS*

In the town of Webster, Pennsylvania, Doctor Thorpe comes to establish himself among the Pennsylvania Dutch. He finds there a big system of graft, under a ringleader named Mike Goodman. The doctor seeks to abolish this, and to improve the place, especially insisting upon good roads. Goodman's niece, Mollie Graeff, a pretty young girl who has received a good education, is the village schoolmistress. The doctor, not understanding her or the situation, plans to oust her, and to put in a man teacher, some college graduate. In spite of opposition, especially on the part of Goodman, Doctor Thorpe is elected as road supervisor. The doctor and Mollie are thrown more or less together, and Goodman objects. The doctor does not quite understand the case, thinking Mollie has no need of the school for her support. A woman reporter of a Philadelphia paper comes to town and publishes a garbled account of the relations existing between Mollie and the doctor. This enrages Goodman. Mollie argues with the doctor the point of her retaining the school.

CHAPTER XIV.

NO sooner, however, had Mollie seated herself at her desk than she heard her aunt's heavy tread on the stairs, and the next moment her door was opened unceremoniously.

"Here's a letter," announced Mrs. Goodman, her stout bosom panting from the exertion of mounting the steps. "Doctor Thorpe's hired man brang it. I hurried up with it before your uncle seen it a'ready. He has so cross now I can't hardly stand it, and I certainly don't want him to get no more worse. What's *he* writin' to you about?" she demanded.

"I don't know," Mollie answered, her face white and her hand trembling as she took the letter.

"Well, read it oncet and tell me. I'll set a while."

She sank heavily into a chair by the

door and rested her fat hands on her knees; while Mollie, going back to the lamp on her desk, opened and read her letter.

MY DEAR MISS GRAEFF: Unwilling to do you an injustice, I went to town yesterday to talk over this question of a teacher for our school with my friend Kupp, to whose judgment in school matters I must, of course, defer. I put before him some of my reasons for thinking a college-bred man preferable for the position, and at the same time showed him your own arguments against a change being made. The result of our interview is that he and I find ourselves in entire agreement on the subject, and I am therefore now ready to reply to your last communication.

Here Mollie paused, and closed her eyes to steady herself.

"Then my last chance is gone. He has even got Mr. Kupp on his side."

"It's a awful long letter, ain't?" remarked Aunt Louisa, bristling with curiosity. "What's it *about*, anyhow?"

"School business. He tells me he and

*The first installment of "The Fighting Doctor" appeared in the November number of SMITH'S.

Mr. Kupp have agreed that I must give up the school at the end of the term."

"Ach! Now, look. Does he, though?"

"He's persuaded Mr. Kupp to agree with him."

"Well, if he ain't!"

Mollie leaned her elbows on her desk and bent her face upon her hands.

"What'll you *do* when you get chased off your school, then? You'll never be contented just stayin' home to help me."

"I don't know, Aunt Louisa, what I shall do," came her reply from behind her hands.

"Well," Aunt Louisa sighed, as she laboriously gathered herself up, "it certainly ain't give this here fam'ly no pleasure havin' that there doctor settlin' here. It'll spite your Uncle Mike losin' your board money when you quit teachin' worse'n what it spited him to think Doctor Thorpe was *runnin'* after you."

She went out, and, after a moment, Mollie rose, and closed and locked her door. Then slowly she walked back to her desk and took up the letter.

I found some of your arguments very convincing. Of some I was in doubt until I had consulted with Kupp. But when, in comparing the degree of "culture" displayed in the letters I have received from my candidate, the Princeton graduate, with that of your two letters to me—the handwriting, spelling, punctuation, diction, ease of expression, and manifest mental discipline of the two sets of epistles—well, I must admit that your triumph was almost complete; for, although as you say, my own "culture" is too inconspicuous to have attracted your attention, yet I am so fortunate as to have just enough of it about me to enable me to appreciate how much more *you* have than my Princeton graduate.

To bring this matter to a close—my talk with Kupp convinced me that you were right about all the points you made save one. Of that one he would not undertake to express an opinion. But my own opinion as to your not *needing* this position remains, in spite of your protest, unchanged; you and I do not apparently mean the same thing when we speak of the necessity of self-support.

So, while I still think, for your own sake, it would be well for the school to be given to another, yet as I am now sure that my objections to you were ill-considered, I withdraw them. You will not again be made ill

with worry because of any proceedings of mine.

Again I owe you many apologies. I shall hope to receive my pardon for my many offenses the next time I drop in to hear you teach your class in Civil Government.

Sincerely,

M. M. THORPE.

CHAPTER XV.

One afternoon, two days later, Mollie, reckless of consequences, was lingering at her school long after the pupils had been dismissed; long after her uncle and aunt would be expecting her home to take hold of the work.

Doctor Thorpe, who had spent the last hour of the session in an "official" visit to her, had remained while the school sang, from *The American Songster*, the closing song, roaring lustily, "Protect us by Thy *night!*" and other perversions, without a suspicion of the meaning of the words so patriotically shouted.

When the last pupil had departed, he had still remained.

"Your case almost persuades me to throw up medicine and practice Christian Science or 'whatever,' as they say about here," he was remarking, as Mollie, her pallor and languor of a few days ago replaced with a glowing radiance, the buoyant reaction from long anxiety and despair, seated herself comfortably beside him on the platform, feeling strangely indifferent to the inevitable reckoning with her uncle for her tardiness in getting home. "What would I *not* have been responsible for, Miss Graeff, had I persisted in taking from you what you so desperately want to keep? Why, in the name of all the gods, *do* you want to keep this school? It's quite too hard work for a girl like you."

Mollie refrained from telling him that, compared to the sort of labor she had been brought up to do, her present work was like the ease of Paradise.

"If you know any easy way of self-support?" she inquired.

"If you will persist in thinking you've got to support yourself," he shrugged. "I say"—he abruptly changed the subject—"what a crazy jumble life is! Out

there stands my car, and here are you in need of just such refreshing as a swift ride would give you, after having been shut up all day in this room with forty children; but fate decrees that you can't take a ride with me. And why? Because your uncle doesn't like me, and does like you, and you like him."

"That isn't why. It's because the hotel is quarantined."

The doctor looked unenlightened.

"I don't make the connection."

"When the quarantine is lifted, I will go with you any time you invite me to."

"I'll have myself elected township health officer next week, and lift the quarantine. The other candidate is a grafter, anyway. Since that old Menonite, Noah Hostetter, has come over to my side, he'll do anything for me that doesn't butt in on his church game. So, you see, I can easily work it. But will you be so good as to tell me," he inquired, "what the quarantine has got to do with it?"

"If my uncle objects to my riding with you, I can go and board at the hotel."

He still looked unenlightened.

"You don't mean to say," he inquired, a hint of disapproval in his tone, "that you play with the poor man's affection for you like that? Bully him into submission by running away?"

"In all these months, doctor, that you have been among the 'Dutch,' have you ever known one case of a henpecked male?"

"Your uncle's is the first."

"You flatter me. Even I, who have been to Kutztown Normal, can't lay claim to such prowess."

"Then do explain yourself."

"It wouldn't interest you." She dismissed the subject in a tone of finality.

"He thinks I'm abusive to Uncle Mike," she mentally gasped. "And disapproves of me. He'll be trying to reform me next."

It was another case where she could not put herself right; for Mollie had always had a prejudice against flaunting family affairs.

"By the way," he suddenly inquired, changing the subject, since she so willed,

"I've been wondering how you supply yourself with reading matter out here—such as 'The Matrimonial Bureau,' and literature like that."

"The Matrimonial Bureau' came from The Webster Township Teachers' Circulating Library. That's the sort of books they buy usually. Their favorites are Marie Corelli and Myrtle Reed. My own contributions to the library are not popular."

"And what are yours?"

"I ordered one of Maurice Hewlett's, one of George Meredith's, and one of Henry James'. They nearly mobbed me! They refer to 'Rest Harrow' in a *whisper*! I've been thinking of risking Bernard Shaw next. But just fancy his views of things in general dropped suddenly upon a defenseless community like this!"

"Did Kutztown Normal give you a taste for Hewlett, Meredith, and James? I've usually spotted normal-school graduates by—well, by the size of their ears. You're an extraordinary exception."

"I find it's lonesome sometimes to be an 'exception,'" Mollie remarked, rather pensively. "Sometimes I have such a longing for a little fun that I wish I *enjoyed* corn huskings, quiltings, barn dances, and snitz parties."

"What, in the name of Heaven, are 'snitz parties'?"

"A family invites the whole neighborhood to come and cut up apples into 'snitz' for drying; and they make a festive occasion of it. Of course, it always ends in the youths and maidens getting rather boisterous."

"But look here, child. If a normal, healthy craving for 'a little fun' isn't satisfied, one is apt to grow morbid. It is too bad you can't, but—" He broke off, and added, with decision: "I would not urge you to do anything against your uncle's wishes. It is inevitable that he *should* object to my having anything to do with any one he cares for. About the books, it's a good thing, you know, to rouse these township teachers out of their rut, and let them know there are other notions of life brewing in the world than their own long-standing



Here Mollie paused, and closed her eyes to steady herself.

ones. The third generation hence may profit from the rousing you'll give them."

"I had not thought of myself as a reformer."

"Well, don't! It would spoil your expression. You can tell them a block off, these Civic Club women, who are self-consciously helping Humanity."

"Has it affected *your* expression—helping Humanity?"

"But, you see, I never set out to be a reformer. 'Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.' I come under the latter head. I came here to earn my living. But, before I could earn it, I had to clear the way."

"With a road drag," Mollie nodded. "May I ask you," she added hesitatingly, "something that has been puzzling me a good deal? Why is it that you, apparently a man of the world and of some education——"

"Heh?" he laughed.

"Apparently," she repeated imper-

turbably, "of some education, should be content to settle down here? Do you find the life of Webster Township congenial to you?"

"Well, you see, with my little car, I can get *out* of Webster Township so quickly when I find myself stagnating. But why, if you have lived here all your life, should *you* see it as impossible?"

"For you, I meant."

"And for yourself?" he persisted. "Apparently a woman of some education."

"It is not with me, as with you, a matter of choice."

"But, having always lived here, you have an affection for the place?"

She hesitated an instant.

"No," she said, in a peculiarly quiet tone, a tone that, while it piqued his curiosity, checked further questioning. "But you haven't told me," she quickly added, "why you, with the world laid out before

you, should have selected Daniel Webster Township for your abiding place?"

"For no better reason than that it offered an opening when I was looking for one, and because I love the country and hate the life of a town. Since we have automobiles, and are *going* to have good roads, a country doctor's life is not so hard as it once was. I've always wanted land enough to plant a few roses and potatoes, and I've always wanted to live in open spaces; they 'liberate the soul,' as Hichens says; and mine was in bondage on city streets and between skyscrapers."

"And these things count more with you than human fellowship? Some association with your own kind?"

"Well," he answered slowly, "well, I've found you!"

"Mike Goodman's niece! 'One of that breed!'" Mollie quoted.

But as she glanced up and saw his crimson embarrassment—Doctor Thorpe embarrassed!—she half regretted her impulsive retort.

"My own words are become a boom-erang. But, bear in mind, I spake them when I had not seen you, had only heard how 'tony' Kutztown Normal had made you, and how 'proud it got' you. But, I say! No wonder you won't go out in my car with me! I wonder you'll speak to me."

"Oh," she said lightly, "I don't take you so seriously, doctor, with your road drags and other and sundry reforms."

"Look here!" he abruptly demanded of her. "Will you kindly account for yourself? *You* a product of this Pennsylvania Dutch district! You're not, you can't be! I've been misled, deceived! The Pennsylvania Dutchman of the soil is neither subtle nor sprightly, picturesque nor amusing. He is stolid, immovable, without humor, as uninteresting as a log of wood."

"It's well you are not making these remarks to Susan."

"But *account* for yourself. How did you come by such a personality? How do you happen to be so superior?"

"You forget," she said impressively, "that I have been to Kutztown Normal."

He chuckled, and his shoulders shook with laughing.

"Kutztown Normal indeed! Twenty years at that Dutch high-grade grammar school—that's all any normal school is—wouldn't account for *you*. Listen to me. Some day you are going to explain yourself to me. You've a *lot* to explain. Don't you suppose for a moment that I'm not going to see something of you now and then, uncle or no uncle. If I can't take you out in my car, I'd like to see any 'bird or devil' stop me from calling at this school, in my official capacity, to hear you teach your class in Civil Government."

"What I don't know upon the subject!" sighed Mollie.

"Aha! You see, you need looking after. As a member of the board, I consider it my duty to stop in here, say twice a week, or twice a day."

"I'll resign!" she declared; and, as at that instant the clock struck five, she rose so abruptly that the sleeve of her

thin white blouse, catching on the key of the desk, was torn to her elbow.

She held up her arm, and regarded the rent tragically.

"Can you guess—in one guess—the word I feel like saying?"

"Couldn't miss it!" he grinned, as he rose. "Must you really be going? It's very cozy sitting here."

"I know," she answered regretfully; "but I must go."

"And I can't even offer to take you home," he said, as he helped her on with her coat and they went out together.

"No, it will be bad enough to account for my lateness in getting home," said Mollie, as he locked the schoolroom door for her; "but if I came convicted of having dawdled away an hour and a half with *you*!"

"Yes—yes," he answered resignedly. "Anything to keep peace out of the family, as the Irishman said. But you may have noticed that when I want a thing I am rather persistent?"

"Noticed?" Has Webster Township 'noticed' that you've taken it by the ear and are making it walk the chalk line?"

"Well, then, I'm going to put my wits on it, and find a way over this obstacle to your riding with me now and then."

"If you've made up your mind, Uncle Mike may as well throw up his hands and let me go."

"I took Susan out one day," he announced, with a laugh. "It was a holy show! She sat on the extreme edge of the seat, held on with both hands, and emitted a succession of piercing shrieks without pause until I turned around and brought her home. She'd as lief take a ride in an airship. If I take out a convalescing patient, he or she has a relapse. It's rather dreary always going alone. But at least—"

He looked down at her, and held out his hand.

"You'll shake hands with me now?"

She colored as she gave him her own. He clasped it for an instant, then turned away and got into his car.

His meditations on his homeward

way were an odd medley. Mixed with his haunting impressions of the girl's sprightliness and intelligence, the character, the refinement in her young face, the lines and movements of her graceful form, there moved persistently across his mind that little thing that distorted his perfect picture of her.

"I wonder if there's just a bit of hardness about her, in her feelings toward her uncle and aunt, who seem to have done so much for her. Susan says they took her when she was a homeless, orphaned infant. Whatever they may be in themselves, she owes them at least gratitude. They have certainly done awfully well by her to have made her what she is. Mike's kindness and generosity to that girl have probably been the only good and decent things in his whole life. It is so often the case that a childless couple will grow fonder of an adopted child than they ever would have been of their own. I don't know why, I'm sure, but I've observed it. And to think of her suggesting that she could work them by running off to the hotel if they didn't give her her head."

CHAPTER XVI.

But in the next few days, in the midst of his now pressing practice, the doctor found his mind's eye incessantly confronted with the image of Mollie Graeff. Every changing expression of her face, every attitude in which he had ever seen her, every bit of drollery he had heard from her lips reviewed itself again and again in his brain.

"What the devil ails me?" he would demand of himself irritably, tossing on his sleepless bed. "Damn the little, alluring rascal! Can't I shake her for one minute and get some sleep?"

Then he would arise in the small hours of the night and indite an epistle to her—which sometimes would find its way into the fire, and sometimes be slipped, early next morning, into the post office.

He would write:

Why do you possess me so, you mysterious, bewitching young person? I am ab-

surdly interested in everything associated with you. The Seat of Learning, for instance, has for me a charm not accounted for by its architecture. Your remotest relative, I am sure, would be to me an object of curiosity, not to say affection. As for your uncle, his nearness to you is creating a halo about his brow. I find myself wondering about you—wondering and wondering until it becomes a torment!

Another time:

I am by nature an anarchist; incapable of accepting things on faith—without questioning, analyzing; and ever ready to demolish what is manifestly outworn. The marriage relation, for instance, has seemed to me, since my first awakening to manhood, an unnatural and artificial institution, for the simple reason that man is by nature polygamous, and it is a question whether any institution that goes against nature is wholesome. Just as a spice, eaten all day long, loses its flavor—for the eater—so the most attractive woman ceases, after a while, to allure a man of imagination. Just so soon as she is no longer a surprise or a mystery she becomes commonplace, and the glamour is gone. Realizing this, I have always been afraid of marriage. To marry a woman and cease after a while to love her passionately would be to make her unhappy; and I should shrink from that more, perhaps, than the average man.

A married friend of mine, a spiritually minded chap, once told me that he considered his own marriage to be grounded on something far more fundamental than mere allurements and glamour. But what is more fundamental than the attraction of sex? If that doesn't take one down to rock bottom I don't know what would!

And on yet another day, he wrote:

Every hour in the day, indeed I believe every minute, I am wondering what you are doing, thinking, and, most of all, *feeling*. If you are one-thousandth as interested in my internal works, there's no danger of our ever boring each other.

It has come to me, in the stillness of the night, with an exquisite sense of the joy of life, that with you I am going to have the rare experience of a very real friendship; the sort that will reach far down into the solitary places of my soul; that will open up the floodgates and let the current of my life flow forth as it never has done with any one I have known. How is it that with you I have always felt instinctively that I might—if I would—yield to an unrestrained expression of myself? And do you know, I believe there is no gift of life so blessed as such a friendship? Yet how rare it is! How seldom we meet one with whom we can be ourselves and be understood? With you I have felt, in every serious or trivial word that we have spoken together, a significance which re-

veals to me that you and I can, if we will, deeply understand each other. And, Mollie, the knowledge is very sweet to me. I wonder am I making love to you?

Mollie found herself rather dazed and appalled, though roused and stimulated, to a strange state of emotion by these extraordinary communications. It cannot be denied that they were a most cheering factor in her monotonous and struggling days; that they gave a zest to life which, no matter how overworked she was, made her eyes perpetually bright, her lips soft and gentle, her voice very sweet and happy.

So, in spite of the fact that the end of the month drew near, that the hotel was still quarantined, that her uncle, having quickly recovered from the temporary check put upon his bullying by the suggestion that the doctor might take the school from his niece if she proved inefficient through overwork at home, was bearing down upon her very hard, Mollie could not be gloomy. What she was going to do in the final conflict with her uncle she could not imagine. And only a week now until pay day.

It was not until the dreaded day actually arrived that she again saw the doctor. This time he did not even go through the form of an official visit, but openly came to the schoolhouse just after the pupils had been dismissed at four o'clock in the afternoon.

Mollie was conscious of a change in him as he gravely, almost solemnly,

shook hands with her, and they sat down together behind her desk. He looked pale, his habitual good-humored, offhand manner was replaced by a worn look of utter seriousness; and there was a gleam in his eyes as of a strained eagerness, almost fierceness, before which her maiden soul recoiled fearfully, yet which, at the same time, thrilled and fascinated her.

Leaning back in his chair, he crossed

his great legs, clasped his capable-looking hands on his knee, and opened fire with an abrupt question.

"From what you have observed of life, what would seem to you to be its purpose?"

"Now, fancy being pulled up suddenly, after a day's teaching, with a question like that! Why do you come to me to find out what I am sure even the president of Harvard couldn't tell you?"

"He couldn't, I know. The wisdom of the ages has not solved it by so much as a glimmer of light. But what's your idea about it?"

"You remind me of Madame De

Staël, who turned to the philosopher Kant, at a dinner, and said: 'I have five minutes to spare. Can you give me your theory?' My idea about it is that most people have no purpose. They are 'like dumb, driven cattle.' They don't know where they are going."

"Just so. Most of us are too busy with immediate tasks ever to acquire any far-reaching, ultimate purpose. But the earnest, the thoughtful must pause now and then, in the onrushing



He would arise in the small hours of the night and indite an epistle to her.

current—or the treadmill, as the case may be—and inquire: "What for?" Do you know what *your* purpose in life is, Mollie Graeff?"

"The mirage that constantly lures me, even while I know it is a delusion, like the child's weary journeying to the foot of the rainbow, is the achievement of happiness. Sounds like a graduation essay, doesn't it? But it's quite impromptu."

"The achievement of happiness? To ward off misery is as far as most of us ever get. It seems manifest, in spite of the Christian Scientists, that the race is not intended to be happy. Because simply it isn't, except in rare spurts. The Greeks recognized that one must actually be afraid of perfect happiness; Nemesis would be at the door."

"Yet Browning, in 'The Statue and The Bust,' teaches that it is only the faint-hearted and fearful who never win anything; who, in their dread of incurring unhappiness, let every chance of happiness slip by."

"Exactly. That's what I came to talk to you about. To be cautious, to mistrust an apparent chance of ecstasy, of blessedness, to doubt one's ability to live up to the high calling of an exalted happiness, is to miss everything life might offer. He wins who *risks*. Now, to recognize this is an immense point gained. It positively liberates the soul to unbounded spaces. I want to ask a favor of you, Mollie."

"Yes, Doctor Thorpe?"

"I want you to tell me about yourself. Begin away back at 'Once upon a time.'"

He folded his arms, settled himself comfortably, and looked at her expectantly.

"It isn't at all a romantic or interesting tale," said Mollie; and unconsciously her voice took on a subdued and saddened tone as she began to relate the story upon which, in these latter years, she was wont to brood unhappily. "My father, Aunt Louisa's brother, was a physician, the only one of his family that was given an education, although his father was a rich farmer. My fa-

ther took the matter into his own hands and educated himself. He married a Southern girl of an old and proud family, whose people cast her off because of her marriage. A month before I was born, my father died of blood poisoning contracted in an operation, and my mother died at my birth. So my uncle and aunt, who had no children, adopted me."

She paused, her eyes downcast, her face pale.

"When I think," she went on slowly, "of how different my life would have been if fate had not so turned it out of its course, of what my childhood missed, of what I am bereft *now*—" She stopped short.

"But your foster parents have been devoted to you?"

"I am not sure that they would have been any different with a child of their own."

"So I have understood."

"But the Pennsylvania Germans are not an affectionate race, doctor."

"Aren't they? I have wondered about that. They are certainly not demonstrative in their affections. I have seen a daughter, who was leaving home for several months' absence, shake hands with her mother, and call good-by over her shoulder to her father. But I've always supposed they must feel more than they showed."

"You know their theory or feeling about their children? Children are the property of their parents, and whatever is invested in them must yield a return."

"The relation being commercial rather than human?"

"About half and half."

"So," the doctor asked, "the money invested in *you*, in your education at Kutztown Normal, you are expected to make good for that, in some way, eh? But how on earth—"

"It was my own money, inherited from my father, that took me through Kutztown."

"Indeed! Ah, indeed!" Thorpe repeated thoughtfully. "Then you are not so greatly indebted to this uncle of yours?"

"Did Susan tell you I was?"

"The general impression seems to be that you rule the poor man with a firm hand."

Mollie made no comment. Doctor Thorpe recognized that, whatever the relation between her and her uncle, she did not relish it as a topic of conversation.

"Your mother's people," he inquired; "did you ever hear from them?"

"My mother's sister wanted to take me when I was five years old, but Uncle Mike would not give me up."

"He had grown so fond of you?"

"Extremely fond!" she gravely answered.

Thorpe regarded her for a moment thoughtfully.

"Fond of her paternal inheritance, she means, damn the old scoundrel! Poor child! I begin to see light now."

"Then you were not left dependent upon your uncle?" he lightly inquired. "Your father had left something?"

"Yes."

"And you never heard more from your mother's people?"

"Nothing."

"They would be proud of you."

It came from him involuntarily, the ardor with which he said it bringing a deep color to her pale cheeks.

"Can it be that a few years at Kutztown has been your only experience of life outside of Webster Township?"

"Probably no other school in all the world could have given me so much. It gave me the one good, beautiful, bright, great thing my life has known—the friendship and love of the Moores."

Launched upon this congenial theme, Mollie, with soft, shining eyes, talked eloquently of those years of her forming and growth, and of her beloved friends.

As Thorpe listened, fascinated, the force and depth of the girl's feeling for these people, who had opened up for her the golden gates of culture and of love, measured for him the degree to which she had been starved at her uncle's hands.

He felt convinced, from her very reticence on the subject, that her foster

parents had taken advantage of her; had even, perhaps, wronged and defrauded her. He knew too much of Mike Goodman's character politically not to believe him capable of any dishonesty that would add a farthing to his purse.

"Yet not one word from her of bitterness against him or his wife. A rare, fine soul she is," he thought, with a throb of his heart that sent the blood coursing to his brain. "If I could make her *mine*!"

The room danced before him, as if he were swooning, and he closed his eyes for an instant to steady himself.

"I'm sorry," he heard Mollie's voice speaking, as though from a distance, "but I shall have to go now. This is pay day, and I have to call on the secretary of the board for my check."

"Will you let me take you in the car?"

"Thank you. Of all times, not today."

"Will you tell me," he suddenly demanded, "on what this deference to your uncle's prejudice against me is grounded, since it is evidently not, as I have supposed, a filial loyalty to your foster father and benefactor?"

She looked up, as she stood before him buttoning her coat; and there was a strained, almost tragic, look in her eyes.

"No, it is not loyalty or affection, as you have supposed. It is fear—*fear*, Doctor Thorpe."

"Fear of your uncle?"

"Of his turning me out of his home if I disobey him. You see, the hotel being closed, I would have nowhere to go."

"Ah! He uses *that* weapon?"

"Yes."

"I see. It's characteristic of him. Very characteristic!"

"Yes," she admitted, in a low voice, her eyes downcast, "it is characteristic."

"You've been bullied like that all your life, I suppose?"

"I've had to fight hard for what liberty I've had."

"You did not tell me all your story, then, just now?"

"No, I did not tell all."

Before he could answer, there was a sound of scuffling feet in the vestibule, the door was pushed open noisily, and Mike Goodman strode into the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Ha!" Mike's small eyes, exulting vindictively, regarded Mollie and Thorpe as though they were two culprits caught in their wickedness. "So"—he turned his twinkling gaze upon the girl—"this *here's* where you've been dawdling—in *such* company!" with a twirl of his thumb toward Thorpe. "Ha!"

The two, held fascinated by his twinkling gaze, remained silent.

"What d'you mean, Mollie," demanded her uncle roughly, "not comin' right home then, to help along with the work?"

Mollie turned to the doctor and held out her hand.

"Good-by, Doctor Thorpe."

He hesitated to take his dismissal, glancing from her to her uncle as he held her hand, as though unwilling to leave her alone with this angry little brute. But her eyes as well as her words asked him to go, and not add to her mortification by his presence. So, to spare her feelings, but very reluctantly, he turned away, and went from the room. But before he left, the firm clasp of his hand and the long look with which their eyes met told her that, whensoever she needed him, he was at hand.

"So—o!" remarked Mike, the moment the door closed upon the doctor. "It's went *that* far a'ready, heh? That he stays an hour after school, and keeps you when you had ought to be home helpin'! And that he slings such *looks* at you! Ain't? Yes, mind if he don't make the eyes at you yet! Well," he announced savagely, "this here thing ain't goin' no furdur. Do you understand, Mollie? I say that feller ain't to make up to you whilst you're under my roof. You'll *see* onct what I'll do if I ever find you and him together ag'in."

He paused, but Mollie, pinning on her hat, did not reply.

"You'll go find another stoppin' place, that's what. Whilst under my roof you'll *mind* to me. And it looks like as if you'd be under my roof fur a while yet, too. There's another case of small-pox broke out at the *hotel*. Mister, he come down with it last night!"

Mollie felt herself turn pale at this information; and she perceived that her uncle fairly gloated over her evident consternation.

"So, you see, Mollie, I still got the whip hand, ain't? Well, now, you come on home right ways and help your Aunt Weesy. There's three strangers fur supper. When you didn't git home till half past four a'ready, I started to come to meet you, and I stopped at Joe Stumpf's to git your month's pay. Here, you take and indorse this here," he ordered, giving her the check, "so I kin git it cashed at the store on the way home. I got to go to town by the trolley to-night, and I need your board money to take along."

But Mollie, instead of going to her desk to indorse the check, opened her coat and tucked it into the bosom of her gown.

"I shall not cash it to-night."

"Yes, you will, too. I tell you I need what you owe me."

"It is getting dark. We'd better start home," she answered, moving to the door.

"You indorse that there check first!" he angrily demanded, taking a step after her; but she swiftly eluded him, and went out.

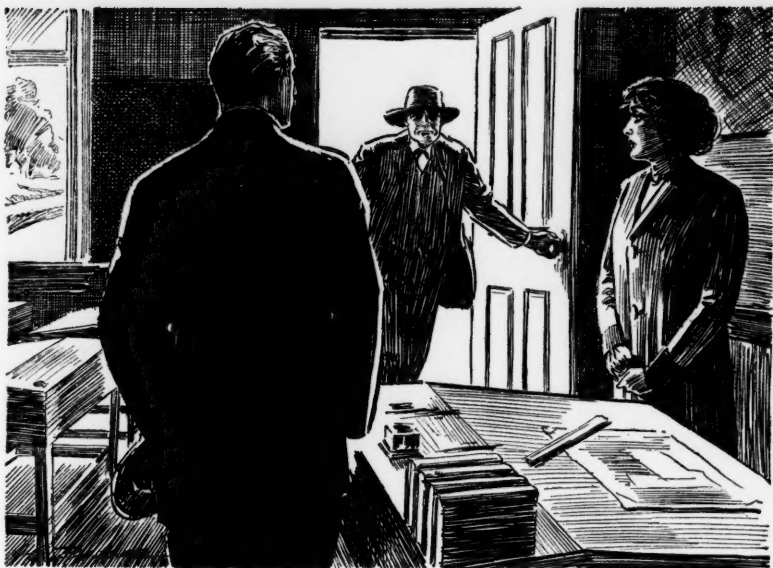
"You come on in here," he commanded, following her to the door, his face red with rage, "and do what I tell you!"

"My board is due day after to-morrow. I shall not cash the check and pay you until then. Please come out now and let me lock the door."

"It ain't hurtin' you to pay a couple days ahead when it suits me to have the money to take to town. You don't need to be *that* pee-tik-ler."

"But I mean to be just that particular. I shall pay only when the money is due."

"Oho! You're gettin' highy-tighty



The door was pushed open noisily, and Mike Goodman strode into the room.

again, are you? Are you *forgettin'* what I tole you—that mister at the hotel has got the smallpox? Now, are you mind-in' to me, or ain't you?"

"I shall answer your question, Uncle Mike, as we walk home."

"There ain't but one answer you darst give me," he affirmed, coming forth into the deepening twilight of the November afternoon. "You'll indorse and cash that there check as soon as we git to the store; then, if you won't indorse it here, I wisht I hadn't of *gave* it to you."

Mollie locked the door, and they started on their long walk from the schoolhouse to Mike's home.

"What makes you act so stubborn-headed?" he reasoned with her, obliged to walk fast to keep up with her long, swift pace. "You know you got to do what I tell you, *whether* or no."

"I owe you less this month, Uncle Mike, in view of all the work I have done."

"What's the good of talkin' nonsense? You know well enough that I ain't tak-

in' off nothin' fur the little work you git through between school. You owe me your full board. Five dollars a week. No more, no less."

"I am charging you two dollars a week for my three weeks' work. You would have had to pay any one else three dollars a week for what I've done."

"You're chargin' me! Well, of all the cheek! Chargin' me yet! Now, look a-here, Mollie, what's the use of your tryin' to row about it when I got you so in the corner? You ain't in no position to tell me what you'll do and what you won't do. Chargin' me six dollars fur your work yet! Ha, ha!" He laughed aloud at the absurdity.

"You may as well know now, Uncle Mike, that I intend to deduct six dollars from my month's board."

"And I tell you you ain't doin' nothin' of the kind! What's more, you're stoppin' at the store and payin' me in full to-day. Do you hear?"

"I don't intend to do it, Uncle Mike."

"Are you crazy, or what? Mebby

you think I don't *mean* it that you can't stay in my house if you don't mind to me? You'll stop at the store and do what I tell you, or you'll *go* this here wery night. I've took enough sass and bullyin' off of you, and I ain't takin' no more. Not when I don't *have* to. See?"

"If you really mean that, Uncle Mike, I'll go home at once and pack my trunk."

"You ain't takin' your trunk till I git what you owe me."

"If I leave to-night, I'll pay you what I owe you up to to-day."

"You ain't deductin' no six dollars!"

"Yes, I am."

"Then I'll hold your trunk."

"Then I shall not pay you anything until my trunk is out of the house."

"Where do you think you'll go to, anyhow?" he demanded, almost dazed with the surprise she was giving him just when he thought he had her so securely under his thumb. "There *ain't* no place fur you to go to. *Ach!*" He suddenly laughed. "You'll soon be crawlin' back here fur some place to sleep!"

"Uncle Mike"—she turned to him, and spoke with a quiet firmness—"if you oblige me to leave your house to-night, I shall never return to it except on my own terms. The loss will be yours. It is an advantage to you to have me there."

"You'll come back on *my* terms, my girl!" he affirmed, still entirely confident of the security of his own position.

He was sure there was not a family in the township that would not be afraid to take a boarder so "tony" and "high-minded" as Mollie was known to have become.

They did not speak again as they walked on. Mike was busy with his mental calculations as to how strict he might make the terms on which he would allow her to return when her failure to find a home elsewhere brought her back with her high spirit wilted; and Mollie was helplessly wondering whether any course were left to her but to resign her school and take refuge with the Moores until she could obtain other employment.

"But at this time in the year all school positions are filled," she thought, in despair.

It did seem, indeed, that even Doctor Thorpe's resourcefulness would fail to find a solution of such a predicament as hers should she appeal to him, her only friend near at hand, for advice.

She had no hope of her uncle's relenting when it actually came to her leaving, for she knew he felt too sure of his "whip hand."

It was not until they reached the store that he stopped and spoke, insisting once more that she cash her check and pay him at once in full.

She refused, and walked on; and again he had to hurry to overtake her.

"It is not a question, Uncle Mike, of my paying you a few days in advance or of my holding back six dollars for my work. It is that I don't intend—smallpox or no smallpox—to be imposed upon. The more I concede, the more you exact. We may as well call a halt right here, and decide now whether or not I stay with you. If I stay, it is as a boarder, independent of your authority."

"On them terms you *don't* stay."

"Then there's no more to be said."

When at last they reached home, Mollie, not stopping to eat any supper, went straight up to her room, packed a suit case, and left the house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

But what now? She had not an idea where to turn her steps.

Had she not all her life been overworked? No doubt she would in the past have taken some time to form a few friendships among her neighbors; friendships which now might have served her well. But there was no one to whom she had the least excuse for going.

Carrying her heavy suit case, she wandered down the street toward the general store while trying to decide what to do. A cold terror began to creep over her. It was indeed a unique sensation to find oneself stranded on a winter night with no possible shelter.

As for taking her difficulty to Doctor Thorpe—of course, if he knew of her plight, he would take her case in hand, and summarily settle it somehow. But an instinct, a sentiment, a something—reasonable or unreasonable, she did not know—held her back absolutely from any appeal in that direction.

As for going into the town of Lebanon, the trolley did not run into Lebanon after six o'clock, and it was now half past seven; so even that refuge, to which only extremities would drive her, was not available.

Mechanically her steps took her toward the schoolhouse, the suit case laming her arm as she walked.

"Surely," she said to herself, her lips quivering, "this night's experience ought to harden me for anything life may ever bring to me."

All at once she stopped short, put down the suit case, and raised her drooping, brooding face. Her dull eyes suddenly sparkled with the bright idea that had come to her.

"It would work for a few days, anyway, and by that time Uncle Mike may relent. Or something may turn up, Mrs. Micawber."

Picking up her luggage, she hid it in a narrow, dark gateway at the side of a small frame house; then retraced her steps to the general store.

Her purchases were extensive and varied; fruit, tea, bread, butter, eggs, milk, a small tin box of sugar, candles, a cup and saucer, a little kettle, and a cheap but warm carriage blanket.

"This here's somepin new ag'in," remarked the proprietor of the store, as he tied up the articles she had bought. "What does Mike Goodman's want with buyin' milk and eggs when they got their own cow and chickens? And since when did missus stop bakin' bread a'ready, heh?"

"It is odd!" Mollie conceded tranquilly, offering no explanation.

The proprietor looked at her sharply. Another sample, this, of her having got so "proud." "She won't even make herself common enough to converse a little friendly when she comes to trade."

The proprietor was a school director, and he put it down against her.

It was necessary, Mollie knew, to avert a scandal as long as possible; so, on leaving the store with her heavy bundle of purchases, she walked back toward her uncle's house until she was far enough away to escape the curious eyes of the storekeeper. Then, crossing the road, she went back on the opposite side. Passing the place where her luggage was hidden, she walked on down the village street to the extreme end of it. A two minutes' stroll beyond the end of the street brought her to the dark and solitary field in the midst of which stood her schoolhouse.

She unlocked the schoolhouse door; and when she had gone in and lit a candle, which she took from her big bundle of purchases, she stirred up the fire in the large stove, and then proceeded to unpack and dispose of her belongings.

While the fire was coming up, she went back to get her suit case.

"Beautiful!" She breathed a great sigh of relief when at last she felt herself safe under cover for the night. "Why didn't I think of this before? Such a simple solution, after all."

She wondered how long she would be able to keep it up without discovery. She would use all possible precautions, and hope for another way out by the time this way became unsafe or impossible.

She made herself some tea, and with keen relish ate a supper at her desk of fruit, bread, and butter. She was beginning to feel the zest of an adventure.

With the cushion of her desk chair and the carriage blanket—the lurid colors of which she felt to be an excellent counter-irritant to her other troubles—she managed to improvise a bed on the platform; and, having cleared up the remains of her luncheon, and beginning to feel the reactionary fatigue that follows excitement, she decided to undress and settle down for the night.

"What a weird experience," she smiled, as, robed in her nightgown and a warm kimono, she let down her long hair and brushed it. "Necessity cer-



Mollie felt herself stiffen with consternation.

tainly *is* the mother of invention. If some one else had not said that, I'd have said it to-night, all by myself, I'm sure. I wonder whether Uncle Mike is the least bit worried about me. No," she decided, "he's too consumed with rage at being foiled."

She could fairly feel the spite of his little soul at her persistence in thwarting his will and his greed. Yet she knew that, strangely enough, he would be more apt than her aunt to be anxious about her. She had never known her stolid Aunt Louisa to worry about anything in her life. She was quite sure that, were she carried into her uncle's house next day frozen to death, her aunt, much as she might regret the tragic fact, would not be stirred out of her customary calm.

Considering the circumstances, Mollie slept remarkably well that night; and when, next morning, at half past eight o'clock, the children began to arrive at the schoolhouse, no faintest sign was

visible to the sharpest young eyes of the fact that since last they had left this room it had served the purposes of kitchen, boudoir, and bedchamber. Mollie's toilet and culinary effects were safely hidden under the desk and down in the coal cellar.

All day long she found herself very nervous with apprehension of her uncle's appearing.

But the day passed by in its usual monotonous routine. There wasn't even a letter from the doctor to break the dullness, nor yet the sound of his motor going by the door.

After school in the afternoon, leaving the schoolroom open for a thorough ventilating, she took a long walk beyond the village. She felt the need of escaping from her hiding place long enough to keep it from seeming like a cage.

As she did not wish by any chance to meet the doctor, she kept away from the highroad. What she desired above all things was to avoid any notoriety as to her escapade. Not because she was cowardly, but because notoriety, in such a case, would almost certainly mean the loss of her position. Should the doctor meet her, she knew he would have her whole story out of her very quickly; and, if he took the matter in hand, the whole township would know of it. There *must* be a quiet, undramatic way of settling her difficulty.

She returned from her walk exhausted, for her diet of fruit and bread was not sufficiently sustaining for the arduous work of her school. She had managed to eat a boiled egg for her breakfast; but at noon she had not found time for more than a cold lunch. So she gave herself as substantial a meal as was possible with the limited accommodations of the schoolroom; then, somewhat strengthened and refreshed,

she spent the evening in writing to Anna Moore.

She concluded, as follows, the account of the past two days' experiences:

What the outcome will be I am no nearer to knowing than I was when I walked out of Uncle Mike's house last night. Of course, he will soon find out that I am taking refuge in this schoolhouse. Such a thing can't long be concealed, though I am taking every sort of precaution; and the schoolhouse is fortunately well out of the village. But when he does discover me he will be very likely to let me take my choice between submitting to him and being reported to the school board for lodging and cooking in their precious school building.

Even Doctor Thorpe could scarcely save me from the consequences of such madness. Anything unusual seems madness to this most "settled" of all races. And I know just how hopelessly bad my case would look to them. Don't you see? That I should demand payment for helping my benefactors with the ordinary routine of the housework for the little I can do out of school hours; and that I withhold the price of my board when I am making the really unwomanly salary of forty dollars a month—too much for any mere woman to have control of without being unsexed by it—such behavior, I assure you, would be past condoning by the standards of life in Webster Township.

Should Doctor Thorpe discover my "do-in's" before Uncle Mike does, I think his method of procedure would be to take some family of the township by the ear, or perhaps the throat, and demand that they cheerfully receive me into their house as a boarder. I can't think of anything else he *could* do, if he decided he must do something—which is, of course, a foregone conclusion. He always decides he must do something—especially where I am concerned. Naturally I prefer "a lodge in some vast wilderness" to being forced upon the unwilling hospitality of any of my fellow citizens.

Of course, over Saturday and Sunday I shall go to Lebanon to a hotel. Oh, Anna, I'll tell you what—

At this point suddenly, without the warning of approaching footsteps, there was a sharp, loud knock on the schoolroom door. Mollie's face went white, and her knees shook as she rose from the desk and stood a moment, trying to get herself in hand and decide swiftly what to do. It was Uncle Mike at last! A glance at the schoolroom clock showed her that it was half past nine o'clock. A wave of fear surged over her at the bare thought of encountering her vindictive and very brutal relative

alone in this solitary place at an hour when every citizen of the township would be abed.

"He has come for his money! What a simpleton I was to suppose he might relent! He'll *never* give in to me!"

A peremptory repetition of the knock made her start violently and quickly step down from the platform. An instinct of self-defense made her pick up, in passing the stove on her way to the door, the large poker that lay across the coal bucket. But, after an instant's hesitation, she put it down again.

"No use. I wouldn't hit him with it, anyway. I'd be afraid of hurting him!"

The schoolroom door being locked, why not blow out her candles, and simply keep quiet and not open to him? No use in that, either, for the lock was so flimsy it would give with the least forcing; and, if her uncle wished to come in, she knew she could not keep him out.

So, with a long, deep breath, in which she tried to breathe in courage and endurance, she opened the door.

"So—o!" drawled Mike, with his characteristic forward thrust of his big, round head, as he pushed past her into the room. "So—o! *Here's* where you're stoppin'!" glancing at her improvised bed on the platform. "Aha! Well, honest to gosh! If you ain't a little diel, I never seen one! How long did you expect to keep this up, anyhow?"

Mollie strolled over to her desk and sat down.

"Sulky, heh?" he grinned, following her. "Well, you know you can't keep this here *up*. So you better end it right now. Gimme what you owe and come on home."

No answer from Mollie.

"I tell you, gimme the money you owe me and drop these here crazy behaviors!" he demanded, coming nearer and standing over her threateningly. "I ain't leavin' this here place till I *git* it. If you don't give it peaceable, I'll *take* it."

"You don't suppose I'd be so stupid as to keep money about me, do you?" she coolly answered.

"You gimme the money or either a check, or I'll *make* you."

She leaned back in her chair and folded her hands in her lap.

Mike regarded her for an instant, then turned, went to the door, locked it, and came back to her. When his back was toward her, Mollie slipped something from her desk into her lap and covered it with her hand.

"Look a-here, Mollie," he resumed, more mildly, "seein' you're so wonderful fond fur your money and so tight with it, I'll *leave* you keep part of what you're owin' me, if you'll——"

His voice was suddenly husky, and Mollie looked at him in alarm. He was standing very close to her, and his face was almost purple as his little, beady eyes darted over her person like tiny tongues of flame thrust out to lick her shrinking flesh.

"If I'll what, Uncle Mike? Any reasonable wish of yours, I'll try——"

"You know how much I always liked you, ain't, Mollie?"

"Well?" she inquired, this unexpected suavity of his tone and manner making her blood curdle.

"And the way I've gave in to you about this, and that, and whatever?"

"Yes. Because you've had to, Uncle Mike."

"Don't you know you could have your own way with me *all* the time—if you was smart?"

Mollie felt herself stiffen with consternation. His look, his bearing, the locked door! Her eyes dilated with terror of him. Her sense of horror held her rigid.

Mike suddenly put out his hand and clasped her shoulder; but his touch released the frozen spell under which, for a moment, he had held her. She sprang away from him; and, with the high-backed desk chair between them, she faced him.

"You may search this room and take anything of mine you can find that you want. But if you touch *me*——"

She held up a small tin box. "This is red pepper. I'll defend myself."

"Aha! Defend yourself with such a box of pepper!" he laughed scornfully.

"If you take a step toward me, I'll dash this red pepper—*red*—into your eyes!"

"You wixen!" He glanced at her furiously; but he was afraid of that small poised box.

"Anyhow, then, you ain't sleepin' *here* to-night!" he growled. "I kin go git, anyhow, two directors to come along and help put you out. We'll take you to a crazy house, that's what! Yes, a crazy house yet! Throwin' red pepper or what at people's eyes! You'll see oncet who'll beat in this here game! You just wait and *see* oncet!" he venomously flung at her as again he turned and strode to the door.

He went out, banging it after him. Mollie sank into her chair, limp and white.

"He'll do it! He'll bring two men to help him put me out! They'll tell me to go home with him or sleep on the high-road! Well," she concluded, her head falling wearily against her hand, "I'll choose the highroad. And to-morrow I'll take the first train to Kutztown. I'm beaten. I can't hold out here any longer. I ought not to try. I can't go on living in this environment, anyway. It takes too much out of me. Everything that's decent. Professor Moore will find me *something* to do, and——"

A knock at the door brought her to her feet.

"Back already! Well"—she sank again into her chair—"no matter. They can only turn me out. That's *all* they can do."

Another knock; louder, sharper.

She rose, listlessly walked across the room, and opened the door.

Doctor Thorpe stood before her.

CHAPTER XIX.

Doctor Thorpe, returning home in his car at ten o'clock that night, slowed up as he came within a half mile of the schoolhouse.

"To such a pass have I come," he thought, "that, even when she isn't in it, I yearn to gaze on the edifice that knows her presence through so much of the day. Hello! What's this?"

Startled at what he suddenly noticed, he pulled up short. From the distance of a quarter of a mile, he distinctly saw, at the foot of the straight road he had been traversing, a dim light at the two front windows of the school building. In his quick apprehension of some disaster to Mollie, Thorpe's heart gave a great wild throb in his breast.

"Now, what under heaven does *that* mean? Why is she, or any one, there at ten o'clock at night?"

Quickly deciding that he must solve the mystery without letting his motor give warning of his approach, he jumped out, left the car standing on the pike, and ran swiftly down the road to the foot of the long slope.

Only the two front windows of the building were without shutters; and from them he could see naught but rows of empty desks. They did not look in on the platform. He could hear no sound within.

He stepped to the door, and knocked, waited a moment, then knocked again.

The door opened, and Mollie, looking white and strained, stood before him. At sight of him, she seemed suddenly to collapse. She leaned against the wall, clutching at the doorknob to hold herself up. But, before he could speak, she had rallied.

"Is this an official visit?" she inquired, her eyes all at once very bright as they rested upon him.

"Decidedly so," he answered, stepping inside and closing the door. "As a member of the school board, I prohibit the teacher from such reckless disregard

of her own safety as to be alone in this building at ten o'clock at night."

"In the eyes of this community, doctor, the danger would consist in your being here with me."

"That is so true that you must come away from here with me at once. What on earth!"

His eye, falling upon the platform, saw a cushion and a carriage robe spread upon the floor, as though for a makeshift bed. Over the chair hung a kimono; on the desk was an open suit case.

His glance returned to Mollie's face, noting its pallor and the heavy-lidded eyes.

There was something which shone from his countenance upon her misery that suddenly made her own eyes fall and two great tears roll down her face.

"Mollie!"

She looked up. He held out his hands.

"Come here!"

But she stepped back, shaking her head as she wiped the tears from her cheeks.

"If you love me, come to me."

She tried to speak, but again she only mutely shook her head.

"You do love me!" he affirmed.

"How did you know? That is, what makes you suppose anything so—so entirely unlikely?"

"It would be unlikely, indeed, but that I can't believe Providence could be so wasteful," he exclaimed, his own face going as white as hers under the strong emotion that shook him, "as to leave such love as mine for you unreciprocated. You've taken possession of me, Mollie. I'm all yours."



He folded his arms about her.

"It is only that you pity me! You find me in this plight, and you feel me a responsibility on your hands that you don't know what to do with."

"A responsibility that I know *exactly* what to do with. Don't attribute to me an unselfishness that any sane man would be incapable of, Mollie."

"But what—what is it," she faltered, "that you would do with me?"

"Put you in my car and take you to the nearest minister's."

"Ignoring details like a marriage license and a trousseau?"

"When I was with you here yesterday afternoon and your uncle came in, I foresaw an emergency. I promptly provided for it. The marriage license is in my pocket," he announced, tapping his breast: "Not that you ever gave me any reason to suppose that you loved me; but, as I said, I have too much respect for the ways of Providence to think it capable of such mad waste."

"But," she breathed, "we don't know each other. I—I don't even know your first name. How can I be married to a man without knowing his first name?"

"A difficulty easily surmounted. You can say it after the minister. And you need not be alarmed because you don't know me. All my friends tell me that I improve on acquaintance, and I don't see why my wife shouldn't find the same thing."

"But will you find *me* to improve on acquaintance when I am 'no longer a surprise or a mystery'?"

"Mollie, it will take me all my life to get over being surprised at you."

"Surprised that Mike Goodman's niece can speak grammatical English? You will soon get used to that, and then the 'glamour will be gone.'"

"It is not your excellent English that makes the glamour and the halo."

"People would think you had married me to reform me. The doctor's latest activity in reforms! Undertakes to cure Mollie Graeff of her 'tony ways'!"

"But they accuse me of tony ways, too, Mollie. And just think of the boom to my practice when it gets abroad that

you and I took a ride to-night to the minister's, and returned in triumph to——"

"To Susan."

"My office will have to be enlarged to hold the patients that will be seized with lumbago and rheumatism in order to take a look in on us."

"If you want to marry me for an advertisement——"

"I assure you that is not my paramount reason for seeking your hand."

"But—but my school?"

"Damn your school!"

"That isn't public-spirited of you. And I'm afraid of Susan."

"Damn—that is, bless—Susan! Think of such food for her curiosity and love of gossip!"

"Look here, Mollie." His voice grew deep as he took her two hands in his and drew her gently to him. "You and I have found each other, and nothing in earth, heaven, or hell shall separate us! You do love me? You have loved me all along—as I have you?"

"How could I help it?" breathed Mollie, her bosom heaving, her countenance illumined. "Does one meet a man like you more than *once* in a lifetime? And coming as you did upon the loneliness, the colorlessness of my life! How could I help it? Ever since I first laid eyes upon you, I have thought of nothing but you, night and day."

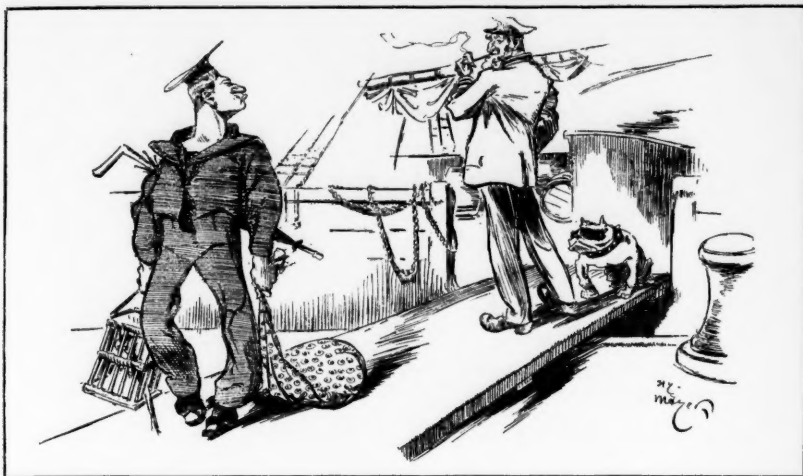
"And I—that night you came to my office to meet the school board—when you and I looked into each other's eyes, Mollie, I think I knew then, as well as I know now, that you were doomed to haunt me for the rest of my days."

He folded his arms about her; and Mollie, unable to restrain longer the ecstasy that flooded her heart and enveloped her whole being, melted to him at last, and laid her face on his breast.

"Oh, Mollie—Mollie," he murmured, "I am unworthy of such a gift of the gods!"

When, fifteen minutes later, Mike returned with his two school directors, Mollie and the doctor were on their way to Lebanon.

THE END.



BY WALLACE
IRWIN

The Forgiving Spirit

ILLUSTRATED
BY HY. MAYER

CAPTAIN SAM SNELL, of the sloop *Prairie Belle*

He started to per-se-cute me,
Though I am the peaceablest sailor
What ever came over the sea.
So I made up me mind to be strictly undaunted,
And never git angry, however he taunted.

"Oh, why don't ye work, ye unnattural shirk?"

He'd cry, with de-mon-i-ac yell.

"Sure, all that ye do is do nothin',

And that ye don't do very well."

As the edge of his satire grew keener and keener,
I smothered me rage with a tackful demeanor.

One day, with a growl and a wolverine howl,

He yelped, as he galloped on deck:

"I've got seven-tenths of a notion

To bust yer ramshackulous neck."

I answered polite: "That would certainly be a'
Original, snappy, and thoughtful idea."

He twitted me plain of me folks up in Maine,
His lack of refinement he showed,
When, with far from a Christian behavior,
He joshed at me legs, which are bowed.
But I says to meself, jest as gloomy as Werther:
"I'm hired by this ship, and I'll never desert 'er."

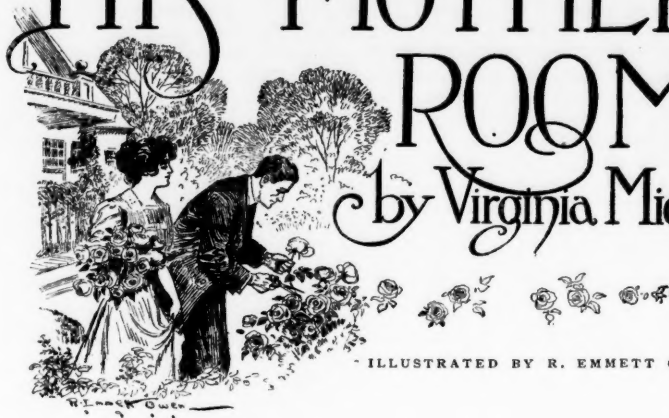
And I say, sir, with pride, that I forcefully tried
To keep me hot temper in check,
When the captain got tipsy with toddy,
And rolled me all over the deck.
When he hung me up high by a wrist and an ankle
To the mizzenmast spar, still I hid me deep rankle.

We was moored to the dock in the port o' Bankok,
When the end o' this drammer occurred,
For the capting come up very quiet,
And says: "Bill, you're fired." At which word
I packed up and quit. For, as sure as ye live,
There is some remarks what a man can't forgive.



HIS MOTHER'S ROOM

by Virginia Middleton



ILLUSTRATED BY R. EMMETT OWEN

CHAPTER I.

HOW far back you would be obliged to go to get at the beginning of a story, I can't tell. Where, for instance, in the long, slow ascent from brute to civilized man, did the ancestor belong who bequeathed Wayne Carmichel his good looks and his bad temper, his warm smile and his heart capable of coldness like a cruel winter night? Nor can any one tell just how much of all that he became—tyrannical, violent, gross—was due to his upbringing.

He was not only an only son, but the only son of the richest man in a small place. From the time when he could first toddle, he always knew that he was going to toddle into the finest house on Elm Street, when his nurse brought him home from his walk. A nurse, too—with long streamers on her cap and a big, long, gray cloak—was enough of a novelty and a glory in Melrose; that in itself set the boy apart. And when you add to that distinction all the others—the big house furnished from abroad, the grand lady mother with a maid to do up her hair and a trip to Europe or New York whenever

she wanted it; the tall, big father who owned all the great mills and the souls of half the workmen in the town—when you add all these together and heap them upon one little boy, it isn't wonderful, perhaps, that he grows up to think himself the very lord and ruler of his world.

Wayne did. He used to kick and scratch his nurses when he was merely a baby; he used to disobey the schoolmaster when it came time for him to go to school, until the schoolmaster would keep him no longer, rich man's son or not. Then he had tutors and private schools, but the tutors never stayed very long with him, and he never stayed very long at the private schools.

He simply had an ungovernable temper, and his parents, when they paid any attention at all to the reports about him, never helped the teachers to maintain any sort of authority, but changed again. He was expelled from two or three colleges before he finally squeezed through somewhere—I suppose he hadn't been there long enough to get into very bad trouble before it was time for him to graduate.

You might think, with every one in

Melrose knowing all about him, that the girls of his age and set would have been glad when he chose a bride somewhere else. But they weren't. Of course, they pretended to be; they went about saying: "Poor thing! Of course, he had to marry a stranger; no one who knew anything about him would marry him—unless for his money. Perhaps that's what she married him for!"

And then they all put on their very crispest lawns and muslins—it was back in seventy-five, when we all wore crisp things, instead of slimpy things, you know—and adjusted their dolmans, and gave a little pat to their hair nets, and went up to call.

How we ever managed to come away with rancor in our hearts, I don't know, for she was the most appealing little bride that ever came to Melrose—slim, and young, and soft-eyed, with little hands that fluttered to do you kindnesses, and little smiles that besought you not to mind if neither you nor she could think of the right word to say, and little feet that hurried on hospitable little errands for you, helping the servant in with the wine, and fruit cake, and all that.

There was nothing grand and assured about her, as there was about Madame Carmichel, Wayne's mother. She was as simple as a spray of arbutus—as delicate and sweet. But though Heaven knows none of us was in love with Wayne, we were all bitter because he had found her somewhere far from home, and had passed us all by for her; as far as we knew, he had never even paid one of us the compliment of making love to her—one of his own set, I mean. Of course, there were some dreadful stories about the mill girls, but we weren't supposed to know anything about them.

Well, the old Carmichels put up a new place for the young couple. It is the one we call the Carmichel Place now—two or three miles out from the center of the town; that long, low-built house of creamy yellow stucco; it looks a little like the President's house at Washington, I think. I was in Washington in seventy-seven, when father

was senator. It is quite an estate—Carmichel Place, I mean—with its pillars and its porticoes, its conservatories, gardens, lodges, cottages, its dairy buildings, and barns, and all. You see, Wayne had announced that he was going to be a "gentleman farmer."

As for the shy, sweet, little girl, I think she was glad to have a place to retire to; I think it had hurt her feelings sadly when none of us had opened our hearts and let her in. I think that she was very lonely, what with her grand, stiff, uninterested mother-in-law, and her grand, stiff, uninterested father-in-law, and her uninterested neighbors, until her boy was born.

And by that time she had had a chance to learn more about her husband than courtship was likely to have taught her. There wasn't anything she hadn't had to bear—even before her baby was born—drunkenness, neglect, abuse, unfaithfulness. Wayne had always done exactly what he pleased at the very moment it pleased him to do it, and he did not allow marriage to make any difference in that custom. He had always been capable of real ugliness at the hint of any opposition or control, and he did not change that trait when it was his wife who attempted to exert a little influence.

She, poor, young soul, would never try except in the gentlest way. I fancy those two years before her boy was born must have been very hard for her—lonely, disillusioned, frightened. But it was only her face that gave any sign of what she felt; she never spoke of it, even when some of us had forgiven her for catching her precious husband, and tried to be friendly with her.

I have often wondered what prayers she prayed before Stephen came. Her father's name was Stephen, and this was the way it happened that the baby's was also. Wayne had celebrated the birth of his son in the fashion in which he celebrated most important events in life—by going off on a spree. The pompous old father-in-law and mother-in-law had made their daily visits, but, as usual, the little wife was practically alone, except for the corps of nurses.

Well, suddenly one day, when Stephen was three or four days old, something happened which made it seem as though he were going to die instantly—some convulsion or something; I know so little of infantile diseases, never having married. And the chief nurse was a good, fine, stalwart Irish Catholic. She couldn't let the little one die unbaptized, and she remembered that rule of the church which permits any one to baptize an infant at the point of death.

So she asked little Mrs. Carmichel what she wanted him named, and she, thinking, too, that the baby was dying, dared to say her own father's name, although she knew well enough that it was designed to name him after his father and his father's father. So she cried out, with her poor, heartbroken little voice: "Stephen!" and the child was christened so.

My, didn't that nurse go packing when the Carmichels found out about it! For Stephen lived, after all. And I dare say that they would have had him rechristened if something very dreadful hadn't happened. When Wayne learned how his son had been named—it was Evangeline herself who told him; she had a queer sort of courage sometimes—it seems that he leaned over and struck her on the mouth, the mouth that had pronounced the name. It was the nurse who told me about it. Of course, he was not himself when he did it; drink always seemed to rouse a cruel devil in him.

Well, didn't Evangeline look at him out of those timid eyes of hers, and declare that, sick as she was, she would arise from her bed and walk out of his house and down into the village, and would take refuge with me? Yes, my dear, with me. I am proud to say it. She had always accepted my little overtures sweetly enough, but I never knew that she really understood in her heart how I sympathized with her and loved her, until that nurse told me that. And even afterward, Evangeline never said a single word to me of confidence or of affection for years and years. But she didn't need to. I understood just

as she had understood, and it kept my heart warm.

Well, with the great young man's bride threatening such things—such public scandal, which the old Carmichels never liked, and of which they had had enough while Wayne was growing up—there was nothing for them to do but to try to conciliate her. And that was easy enough to do, after all. They only had to let her call her little son by her own father's name, and she forgave everything, or at least accepted the situation. There is a difference inside, though perhaps the outside looks the same.

There came a time, my dear, when I wondered if it would not have been better that Stephen had died that day when they thought that he was dying. Even yet I am not sure. The way of it was this.

He had grown to be a sturdy little fellow of nine. He looked more robust than Evangeline, but he was like her, except for that. He had her sensitive mouth, her quick, shy, appealing glance, her little, pleading, friendly ways. There was nothing of the Carmichel pomposity, nothing of the Carmichel arrogance, about him.

And he was the very core of his mother's heart. He made up to her for everything—for her husband's complete indifference to her—I don't suppose she saw Wayne, after a while, oftener than once in three or four months; for the shame she had to feel for her husband's uselessness and profligacy, and she was a proud woman, the men of whose race had amounted to something.

Of course, Wayne had long ago given up that pretense of being a gentleman farmer, and that the place was held together was due altogether to her. It is strange how those slim, clinging, little women sometimes develop such a power of management. Evangeline did. She kept the place from going downhill, she bought and sold stock, she set out a white-pine plantation, she rotated her crops so as to enrich her soil. I think that she had a premonition that Wayne, once he got his clutches on his father's fortune, would make ducks and drakes



R. Emmett Owen

"He gave a child's quick cry of surprise and fury, and leaped upon his father—poor baby!"

of it, and she wanted to preserve something for her son; Carmichel Place had been settled on her—more as a compliment, I think, than because any one expected her to do anything with it. But, as things turned out, it was a great blessing. It gave her another occupation besides loving her child. She might have grown morbid had every thought of her life gone to him. As it was, she had a healthy interest outside of him.

But to get back to the time when I thought it would have been better for Stephen had he died when he was a baby. It was when he was nine. His father had been away for several months. I think he had been driving coach horses in England, or something of that sort. Of course, we in Melrose didn't know a great deal of what went on in either the fashionable or the fast circles of foreign cities, but Lutey White, whose cousin was married to

the secretary of the embassy at London, used to hear a good deal. And Lutey had it from Miriam—the cousin, my dear—that Wayne had been making himself notorious in London and Paris over a dancing girl who was only playing with him, fleecing him and laughing at him, so Miriam said.

I think it must have been true, for he came home to Melrose unexpectedly, and in a towering bad temper. And—you know how news filters in a small town; I suppose we are gossipy!—it soon got around that his father had refused to give him some money he wanted. There was quite a big row, but for once Master Wayne did not have his own way. So then he went to Evangeline and told her he was going to sell some of the Carmichel Place stock and was going to mortgage the estate itself.

And she stood out against him. She declared that she would sign no papers

permitting him to do it. The stock he could sell—that she could not prevent—but she would not allow him to mortgage the property.

Their interview took place in the room that was always called Evangeline's. It was back of the library, and it was her private sitting room and her office. You may see it there still, furnished exactly as it was in her day. Three French windows opened onto a terrace on one side; below the terrace was Evangeline's old-fashioned garden—it is there, too, with all its hollyhocks and larkspur, its phlox and its peonies and poppies. Oh, it is a sweet place! And opposite the long windows was the big, brick fireplace, and on either side of it bookcases of mahogany with little leaded panes.

All the things in the room, as you can see if you go to Carmichel Place, were simple, and old, and beautiful, and quaint—mahogany of the Georgian period, I believe. All except Evangeline's desk at one end; that was a big, modern roll-top affair, of mahogany, and every little pigeonhole was labeled. Her worktable stood not far from the fireplace, with its green silk bag dropping beneath its mahogany shelf.

And over the fireplace was the portrait of Evangeline and Stephen, done when the boy was about three. It seems to me the most wonderful picture I have ever seen, but that may be merely because I knew Evangeline so well. It shows her so fragile and so strong—if you can understand me; so slight of body, and with such lovely, indomitable eyes. And never have I seen in any other portrait such a look of love as she has in that one for the child, who is standing by her. If ever there was a picture of a lady—proud, quiet, unconquerable, delicately, austere, pure, and yet tender and gracious, that one is it. Oh, it was a wonderful portrait, and it was the sort of flowering, you might say, of the whole room.

Yes, yes, I will get back to the day when Wayne, her husband, became infuriated with her because she refused to let him have Carmichel Place to

squander. He leaned over her at the desk, and he threatened her with I don't know what all. But she was proof against threats. Then he went off, vowing to break her will. He sold a string of horses for half their value, and he sealed the bargain with a few drinks.

Then he returned to the charge upon Evangeline. He was brutally ugly now. What he threatened her with, as he stood over her at the desk where he found her again, was physical injury. Oh, it was terrible—the threats of the pothouse, the back alley. He would break "every bone in her body," he would—I can't go on. It is too revolting.

Of course, he was half drunk. Evangeline realized that. But as she looked at him out of those clear, direct, beautiful eyes that had been so full of love, and friendliness, and tender appeal when he had first brought her home to Melrose, he seemed to lose his senses in reality. He had his riding crop in his hand, and he suddenly slashed her across the face. And at just that second the only person who ever entered Evangeline's room without knocking—Stephen—bounded in through the French window.

He gave a child's quick cry of surprise and fury, and leaped upon his father—poor baby! And his father, snarling, threw him backward so that he fell against the brick hearth. And that, my dear, is why Stephen Carmichel is a cripple and an invalid to-day. His spine was injured, and one leg was crushed, so that it had to be amputated by and by.

Oh, I don't know how Evangeline lived through it. But she did—she was that kind; unconquerable, for all that she was timid and gentle. But to see the child she worshiped maimed, broken for life!

What happened? Well, Wayne was sobered by what he had done—even he. When the first excitement had quieted down, he acceded to Evangeline's demand for a divorce which gave her the sole custody of the boy. The old Carmichels settled an income upon her, and when they died it was found that

they had left a good share of the Carmichel fortune to their grandson. As for Wayne, he went away to regions more congenial to him than Melrose, and I don't know anything more about him.

And Evangeline loved Stephen, and yearned over him. Yet she learned a wonderful, gentle merriment, so that the feeling of her love would never be oppressive to him. He had marvelous tutors, and he became a great student. And I don't think she ever lost sight of what his father had been, and she always worked and prayed that no taint of that evil nature should appear in Stephen.

He was twenty-three when she died. I don't suppose that there ever was another such case of love as theirs for each other. They were wonderfully alike—I never see Stephen without thinking of her as she was that time I went first to call upon her, a bride. He has all that gentle, open mind toward the world that she had; he has wit, too, and mirth, and of course he is a great scholar. They tell me he has written wonderful books on botany—I have them all, with the inscription: "To dear Aunt Hettie, from Stephen Carmichel," but I don't try to read them. My true niece, Florence, she has read them, and she thinks them wonderful. But for me a leaf or a flower is enough at its own face value; I like them well enough as they are without tearing them up to find out more about them.

I suppose it's the open-air life that Stephen lives. He manages Carmichel Place with more than Evangeline's skill, even, and is always doing queer things like "inoculating" the soil—you'd think it was an arm held up for vaccination. I suppose it's all the outdoor life that has kept him as well as he is. But when I remember the sturdy little boy, and see that crippled man, I could do murder!

Sometimes I am afraid that I have talked too much to Florence in this strain. Sometimes I think that she looks at him with that fierce, maternal passion in her eyes that Evangeline used to have sometimes, and that I al-

ways recognized as a sign that she was thinking of Wayne. And Stephen—he does not look at Florence with any other eyes than those of pleasant, grateful, friendly interest. I know! Although I am an old maid, I know the meaning of certain looks. I think I ought to send Florence away somewhere.

Yet if it could be! She is so strong, and wholesome, and kind! She is like Evangeline in that it is bred in her very bone to be high, and straight, and fine. She could mother him so!

I remember what Evangeline said to me only a little while before she died. Stephen had had one of his bad weeks—he has them now and then—and she said: "Hettie, if only my boy has the good fortune to love and be loved by a sweet, unselfish woman, I think I can forgive God for all that He did so harshly to me. But if he ever loves a selfish or an unworthy woman—a self-seeker—what will become of him, with his sensitive soul and his poor, maimed body? What will become of him?"

I told her that no such chance could befall, and she looked at me with a curious little look of mockery.

"Couldn't it?" she asked me. "Remember his mother loved Wayne Carmichel! But I shall not let it happen. I shall come back to my room, Hettie, and frighten her away the first time she ever comes into it—the wrong woman, I mean! But the right one shall feel me blessing her there."

If it only could be Florence!

CHAPTER II.

Miss Mollie, who kept the Melrose boarding house most patronized by the élite—not of the town, for none of the élite of Melrose boarded, but of the strangers who for one strange reason or another were temporary sojourners there—had never had a "guest"—Miss Mollie was mid-Victorian in her tastes, and you could not insult her more bitterly than to refer to the dwellers beneath her roof as boarders—who excited her quite as much as Miss Jeanette Vaughan.

She fluttered about among her acquaintances, after Miss Vaughan's arrival, and told them all of her excitement and the reasons for it. Miss Mollie's acquaintances among the native aristocracy were many; it was to them that she belonged by birth and early training, and if it had not been for the big bank failure of the late seventies, combined with a very defective education from the wage-earning point of view, strangers

would have had no closer knowledge of Miss Mollie's house than could be obtained across the high privet hedge that shut it in from the street.

"There has never been any one in the least like her in Melrose," said Miss Mollie to her old and valued friend, Miss Hettie—Miss Hettie, who had stood by her, so sisterly kind, when the bank collapsed, and the lover had ridden away, and all the other calamities which can befall aristocratic young ladies in small communities had befallen Miss Mollie. "That is, any one whom we have seen."

Miss Mollie's emphasis on the "we" told that she had but a small opinion of



"You shall tell me why our dearest wishes are denied us."

such comers to Melrose as she had not met—people who stayed at the downtown hotel, for example.

"How did you happen to take her?" asked Miss Hettie.

"It was Doctor Lawrence wrote and asked me to take her. She is a patient and friend of his, so he said; and, of course, any one whom Doctor Lawrence—"

"Of course," acquiesced Miss Hettie. For was not Doctor Lawrence a son of Melrose? And did he not favor Melrose with the most advanced medical and surgical treatment when he came home to visit—and for nothing?

"Did he say nothing else about her?"

was Miss Hettie's next remark after the two ladies had devoted a silent second to the thought of those beneficences of Doctor Lawrence's which made all Melrose his debtor.

"Not a great deal. Here is his letter."

Miss Mollie fumbled in her reticule, and after she had examined the list for the grocer, and a memorandum concerning hand towels, she found the note. She read it mumbly to her friend.

"Has had a nervous breakdown, due in large measure to the foolishly hurried life the women lead here in New York; there couldn't be a better corrective for that than your home in Melrose, Miss Mollie. Miss Vaughan's breakdown is also partly due, I am obliged in fairness to admit, to overwork in her exacting profession—"

"Profession!" cried Miss Hettie.

"That is what he says."

"Her exacting profession. I want her to forget all about it for a month or two, not to hear it alluded to, not to see any one who will speak to her about it, to forget it utterly. I don't want her to be in a hotel or a sanitarium, however. She would find the former too much like her daily life, and as for the latter, she does not need any treatment beyond what her maid can give her."

"Her maid!" echoed Miss Hettie.

"Yes. She's a tall, bony woman, fifty if she's a day—not a bit like what I expected a maid to be. But she gives no trouble at all. And neither," added Miss Mollie dolefully, "does she give any information at all. Not that I ever asked her for any," hastily. "But you know what servants are. Liza tried to talk to her about Miss Vaughan, but she didn't get a thing out of Sandra."

"Sandra?" Miss Hettie seemed reduced to a mere echo.

"Yes. She's an English woman; named Alexandra, if you please, 'after our gracious queen mother, christened when she became the bride of our late king,' she told Liza. She'll talk about the royal family by the hour, if she won't ever say a word about Miss Vaughan. So the servants forgive her. And I dare say there is more to tell."

"But what is so queer about Miss Vaughan?"

"She's so handsome."

"Surely," said Miss Hettie reproachfully, "that is not such a novel thing in Melrose."

"Ah, but it's a different kind of handsomeness. It's more showy; and yet, except for her hair, it isn't so very showy, when you come to analyze it. Her hair is—is really conspicuous, there is no other word for it. Red. Auburn, I guess, is the proper name for the shade. Dark red, but bright, shining as though—oh, as though it were wood just oiled or copper just cleaned! And with big, deep, natural waves in it! And where it leaves the skin—at the edge of her forehead and the back of her neck, you know—crispy curls, little and bright."

"I never liked red hair," said Miss Hettie decidedly.

"Well, I'm not sure that I do. She has masses and masses of it. She just coils it about her head; regal is the way she looks with it, I think. Except for that, there's nothing so very showy about her—and yet she seems a—er—a sort of a conspicuous woman. Her eyes are something the same color, and her eyebrows and lashes seem black. And she has a pale, creamy complexion. She's graceful, too—very graceful. Even the plainest clothes have an air on her."

"We have plenty of graceful girls in Melrose," insisted Miss Hettie, who seemed to think that the honor of the town was at stake.

"I know it," sighed Miss Mollie. "But it's a different sort of gracefulness. Our girls are like young birch trees—just look at your niece, Florence, for example; but Miss Vaughan—well, she—she's different," she ended helplessly.

The different Miss Vaughan was at that moment seated upon a knoll in the woods at Carmichel Place. She was engaged in writing a bitter letter to Doctor Lawrence, using a small lap portfolio of the kind in which ladies with a penchant for outdoor life indulge profusely during July and August. She wrote fluently:

You did an awful thing when you sent me to this dull place. My death by the quick process of boredom will be upon your head.

If, driven to distraction by the fact that I have no human being to whom I can address a rational word, I murder some one, that will be upon your head, too. My dear doctor, vegetation is not rest. And furthermore, what's the good of any bluff between us, as I should have said in my lowlier days? You know what's the matter with me, and why you should pretend to think that a dose of ennui—that's in my newer manner—would cure me, I don't know. I am restless as a panther here. Is there any fool like a woman in love? And to think that when so many men have been in love, after their fashion, with me, he should never even look twice at me! I've a notion to come back, and *make* him. I could do it—believe me, I could do it.

Sandra, who had been to the post office, came up the knoll. Miss Vaughan stretched out eager, gracefully molded, white hands.

"Nothing but the papers," Sandra reported, handing them to her mistress.

Miss Vaughan frowned.

"Drat it!" she said petulantly. Then she added: "Oh, do get along with you, Sandra! You look like a death's-head. Home to luncheon? I dare say. See if you can make some arrangements for getting me a horse to ride somewhere. If I've got to be out of doors all the time, at least I want to have a little more fun than a cabbage."

Sandra departed, and Jeanette Vaughan, yawning, opened the papers, and turned to the theatrical columns. She read with little grunted comments, with an occasional laugh or a sneer. When she had finished, she yawned again, looked carelessly through some advertisements, and then turned interested eyes upon society's notes. She ran down the paragraphs, and came to a sudden halt on one.

Mr. and Mrs. Horace Vanderwater announce the engagement of their daughter, Horatia, to Mr. John Cecil Thorpe-Haddington, second son of the Honorable and Mrs. William Winston Thorpe-Haddington, of Haddington Hall, Bramley-Stokes, Kent,

England. Mr. John Cecil Thorpe-Haddington has been in this country during the past winter and spring on business connected with his father's Western mining interest, and also to witness the production of his play, "Folly's Bells," which had such a successful run at the Empire this season.

"So that was why," said Jeanette Vaughan, after a silent pause. She



She looked at the portrait above the fireplace. "And that is she—and you?" she asked.

looked ill—the creamy pallor of her skin grew waxen, the red lips pale, the reddish-brown eyes darkened with the look of suffering. She put her hand against her side—it shone white upon the "old blue" of her linen frock. "So that was why. Well, I've lost out in the only game I ever played for all I was worth."

She sat still a long time, bitterly recalling all her past until she was engulfed by waves of self-pity, and buried her face upon the soft grass of the knoll, sobbing and crying as unre-

strainedly as she was wont to do all things. She, the gutter child, who had, by her gifts and her beauty, raised herself to a position of some merit, of some dignity—she who had fought against hard odds and had been successful, she was vanquished in the great contest of life, by a girl whose path had been guarded and rose-lined all the way from her cradle.

"Oh, it's not fair; it's not fair!" cried Jeanette Vaughan, lifting her clenched hands defiantly to heaven, and raising her face, marred and stained by tears, at the same time.

A man was looking down on her compassionately—a tall, emaciated man with kind, friendly eyes.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but is there anything I can do for you?"

"You can leave me alone," snapped Jeanette Vaughan, sniffing and winding up her loosened locks.

"Indeed, I will do that if there is nothing else you will let me do for you. But are you sure? You—you seem distressed. It appears to me inhospitable to leave you here without doing anything to relieve your distress."

"Inhospitable?"

Jeanette's hands were still raised to the back of her shapely head; she had unfastened the cuffs of her blue shirt, and the rounded, firm, white forearms were visible. The man looked at them, and it seemed almost as though he blushed beneath his brown, sunburned skin.

"These are the Carmichel Place woods—I am Stephen Carmichel," he answered her questioning tone.

"And I am a trespasser?"

"The dryads are not trespassers," he told her, but the look of friendliness in his eyes, the smile about his sensitive mouth, the simplicity of his manner, robbed the words of any hint of flirtatiousness which they might have had from another man. Then he added: "But you were disturbed when I came upon you. Is it true that there is nothing I can do for you except to leave you?"

"Yes," said Jeanette daringly, "there

is something else; you can stay, if you will, and talk to me."

Stephen dropped upon the grass of the knoll.

"And what," he asked, "shall we talk about?"

"You shall tell me why our dearest wishes are denied us."

"But are they?"

"Where have you lived," she cried contemptuously, "not to know it? How ridiculously young are you?"

"Ah, a half-crippled old fellow like me may have learned that his dearest wishes are denied him without suspecting that that is the case with other people, too," said Stephen. "Especially without suspecting it to be the case with—stray wood goddesses."

His eyes were on the gleaming, grapeviny tendrils of her hair curling at the back of her warm, white neck. He did not hear what she answered, absorbed in contemplation of that loveliness.

They talked on for half an hour, Jeanette willful, daring, bold; Stephen speculative, dreamy, friendly.

"I must get back home to lunch," she said, at last.

"But you don't live in Melrose—how can you lunch there?" he asked her.

"How do you know that I don't live in Melrose? Do you know every one in Melrose?"

"Most of them. I should have known you, anyway, if you had lived in Melrose."

"Well, wherever I live, I must eat."

"Why not lunch here with me?"

"You haven't a hamper with you. How can I lunch here with you? It's a mile back to your house. I've seen it, you see, though I didn't realize that these woods were part of your estate."

"But what you haven't seen, apparently, is my woodhouse, as my people call it—that little cabin study down there—see?—among the trees. I often spend the day working there, and I have a small supply of provisions on hand. I shall be honored if you will share to-day's with me."

She arose, stretching her long, sinuous body as gracefully as a cat arousing

from its sleep on the hearthrug. Stephen Carmichel looked at her with an admiration he did not attempt to disguise. Observing it, a satisfied little dimple dented the corner of her red mouth. One of the things she had found it hardest to bear in Melrose had been the lack of adulation, except the reluctant, frightened regard of Miss Mollie's boarders.

That was the beginning of the small spring idyl with which Jeanette Vaughan, one of the stars of the Ritz-Henley management—born Jane Vose, of a slum region euphoniously known as Swampoodle—sought to divert her mind from the hurt her heart had suffered. Almost daily she met the owner of Carmichel Place in the woods, and, bitter and greedy, she fed her heart on his admiration. She knew his direct, simple, dreamy regard for admiration, although it was of a sort which had not come into her experience before. And one morning it suddenly occurred to her to ask if his feeling might not be transmuted into love for her profit.

The speculation thrilled her; she had a gambler's spirit, and she delighted to play for odds. At the same time, Jennie Vose, of Swampoodle, had had an exceedingly level head upon her graceful, white shoulders—otherwise she would not now be Miss Vaughan, of the Ritz-Henley companies. Why not marry the young man?

"I'm a good five years older than he is," said Jeanette Vaughan to herself. "I'm thirty-two. Ten years more, and there'll be an end of me as a really effulgent star. But ten years more as Mrs. Carmichel, of Carmichel Place, and I'll be a very grand and attractive matron. He's a gentleman—what a gentleman he is!"

She had a throb of passionate admiration for him when she thought of it, and contrasted his gentility with that of fifty men she had known.

"He's rich—rich enough to support even me! He's an invalid, of course, and he has to live a pretty dull life, but he would worship me, and let me do as I pleased, and I needn't spend so horribly much time at Carmichel Place.

And to think what a furore it would create! Any one—any chorus girl—can marry a fool of a British earl, but it takes something more than that to marry an American gentleman."

She was impulsive, impetuous, in all her ways. If the love she had for another man rebuked her, she laughed and scolded it down.

"Love? Bah! Piffle!" she cried. "Hereafter I'll let the man do all the loving, and will save myself pain."

In this mood of daring she met him. He wanted to show her something in the greenhouses, and they left the woods, and crossed the farmlands toward the long, low pile of yellowish buildings. A sudden June thunder shower raced, blue-black, up from the west.

"You must come into the house until this is over," said Stephen. "I am sorry I have no lady there to make you properly welcome. My mother—my mother would have appreciated the opportunity to do so."

His mother! Jeanette's ambition soared. If he began to talk to her in that tone about his mother, she might soon have whatever she would of Stephen Carmichel.

Beneath big, pelting drops, they ran through the rose garden, sweeter, in the sudden dampness, than Araby the blest, up a shallow flight of steps, and in through long, French windows, to a big, old-fashioned, beautiful room. Panting, they paused for breath. And when they had found it, Stephen, drawing forward a low chair, said:

"This was my mother's room. I keep it exactly as it always was. Although I sit and read here a great deal, I have not dragged any of my things into it. It is just as I always remember it—from the time I was a child."

Jeanette looked about her. The graceful, stately, shining mahogany furniture, the quaint worktable, the big bowls of roses—"Garden roses!" she cried suddenly, inexplicably to Stephen. "Not those horrid cabbages of hot-house roses!"—the exquisiteness, a little prim perhaps, but very perfect, all wrought curiously upon her mood. She

looked at the portrait above the fireplace.

"And that is she—and you?" she asked.

"It is," answered Stephen, a little solemnly, as though he were introducing Jeanette to the eager, friendly-eyed, high-bred woman.

Then some one came to tell him that a man waited in his office to discuss a

matter of Jersey cattle with him. He gave an order for luncheon, apologized to Jeanette for leaving her, and went off. She sat in the low chair, and studied the face of the woman whose protecting arm encircled the rosy boy's shoulders.

The splash of raindrops ceased, the dark clouds scudded off, the sunshine flashed forth brilliantly again. A chorus of birds sounded in the gardens. And still Jeanette watched, with fascinated eyes, the pictured woman who so intently returned her gaze. Finally she spoke half indignantly.

"No, I shouldn't love him!" she cried. "You know

it. You know that I love another man. Oh, and I'd go following the man, in spite of everything, if he would only crook his little finger at me! But he won't—he won't—ever, ever! And am I to have nothing because I can't have that? Selfish? I know I'm selfish! If I hadn't been selfish, do you know where I would have been this minute instead of sitting here in your fine-proud-lady room? I'd have been in the

morgue, or I'd have been a poor, bruised creature, old already with abuse from a husband and with worry over a crowd of brats. That's what I'd have been if I had not been selfish! Suppose I should neglect him, leave him by himself? Hasn't he got that precious botany of his to keep him company? And I'd never disgrace him! I've never disgraced even Jane

Vose! Oh—it wouldn't take disgrace to break his heart, wouldn't it? Hmm! Hearts stand a lot of breaking. You know that yourself, don't you?" she ended, with a half-amazed perception of the bitter experience in the bright eyes that looked down upon her. "You know that yourself!"

Still, she sat there, fascinated, defiant, in the calm room where the spirit of the mother struggled for her son's happiness.

"I know it all," she said finally. "He's all that, and more—warm-hearted, sensitive, tender. Yes, I know how his crippled body suffers, and how cour-

ageous he is. And he has always lived here in this place—where a lady lived her life. And the nearest I ever came to having a lady's home was a Louis Quinze suite in a Broadway hotel. But—see what I came from before I reached that Broadway hotel! Why couldn't I educate myself up to this—in time? Oh, I know I don't love him!"

By and by she arose from the little chair, and went and looked through the



"It always makes me feel so to see your mother's portrait," she said vaguely, with tremulous lips.

long windows out upon the terrace and the rose garden.

"Have your own way!" she said shortly, over her shoulder, to the woman in the portrait.

When Stephen came back, she was half reclining upon the long davenport, a very high-heeled slipper and open-work stocking somewhat unduly in evidence, a cigarette in her fingers, and the words of a music-hall song on her lips. The look of expectation and eagerness, which had been on his lean, brown face as he came in, vanished. He seemed baffled.

Then the host's courteous concern for a guest took the place of the other emotions. He led her to the dining room, and they lunched; and as her words and intonation jarred upon him from time to time, and her views, recklessly expressed, offended the scholar and the gentleman who sat on guard among his human desires and passions, he wondered why the four walls of a dwelling should have changed her so.

And he wondered still more, when she was leaving, that she should insist upon returning to his mother's old room—he no longer cared to see her there—and should look with a curious, half-gibing, half-conquered expression at the woman in the picture. And he slightly disliked the little gesture—a military salute from a private to an officer—which Jeanette Vaughan swept his mother.

But the next day, the impression of the actress in the house had faded; he knew that he was lonely; he went back to the knoll, hoping that she would be there. His was such a solitary life, he told himself, and he had been ungracious and ungrateful to criticize the bright visitant whom the fates had sent to him.

But she was not there. The knoll was empty. He stretched himself upon it. Vague longings for companionship stirred within him, such as he had not known before the splendid woman had crossed his path; it was not a yearning for her exactly that he felt, but for all

that she represented. Ah, what did she represent, with her loudness, her cheap, undigested cynicism? But what did she not represent, with her beauty, her glorious hair, her glorious eyes, the firm, round curves of her white arms?

There came a rustle of skirts. He sprang erect. Florence Myrick stood before him, blushing.

"I'm not trespassing!" she cried. "I'm doing an errand. Miss Vaughan—you don't know her, but she's been boarding with Aunt Hettie's old friend, Miss Mollie, you see, and I've seen her there—she went off to New York this morning. And she asked me if I would mind coming here on my way from the post office to look for an amber comb she thinks she dropped here. She says that this was her favorite haunt. And so I stopped on my way up from the mail. You haven't seen an amber comb, have you?"

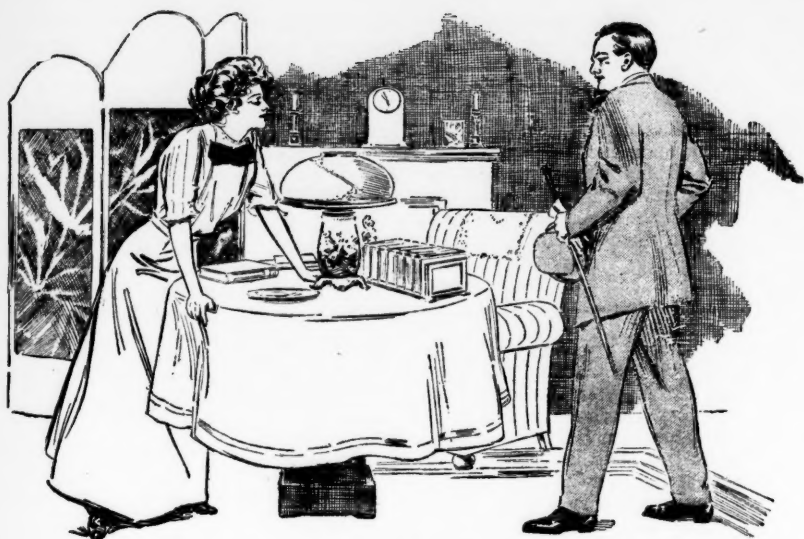
"No," said Stephen slowly. It seemed to him that he was looking for the first time at the delicately tinted face, the large, lovely eyes of the girl, the soft, dark tendrils of her hair about her ears and brow. He bent, and helped her look for the amber comb. It was not there.

"Go back by way of the house," he said, when search had proved fruitless. "I want you to take some roses down to Aunt Hettie, if you will."

When the roses were cut, he led her in through the windows of his mother's room. He glanced up at the portrait. It seemed to him to smile kindly on him and on the young girl beside him. He looked at Florence. Quick, sensitive tears shone in her eyes.

"It always makes me feel so to see your mother's portrait," she said vaguely, with tremulous lips.

With a little rush of feeling, he took her hand in his own. The pictured eyes smiled, the spirit of the place breathed a benediction upon them. And only for one swiftly vanishing second did the memory of the mocking face of yesterday, of the white hand raised in salute to his mother, flash across his memory.



"And do you love her?" Althea had asked tremblingly.

Miss Althea's Christmas

By Anne Witherspoon

ILLUSTRATED BY H. M. BUNKER

MISS ALTHEA HALE was one of the oldest residents of the Rubens' Studio flats—not in actual point of age, but in point of occupancy; for when this elderly and rather gloomy mansion was remodeled to suit artistic needs, she was among the first to take possession.

Under her deft fingers, number seven, on the fourth floor, had soon acquired a very homy air.

The tiny bedroom and kitchen were models of spick-and-span neatness, and even the big studio proclaimed its presiding feminine genius in all its simple, attractive arrangements.

A round mahogany tea table, shining with old silver, occupied one corner of the room, and in another, not too far

from the big fireplace, with its brass dogs and high fender, was placed a wide, roomy divan, heaped with fat sofa pillows. Near the broad window stood a little polished ebony worktable, fitted with all sorts of cunning drawers, in which Miss Althea kept carefully hidden from public view the dainty bits of handiwork that she adored doing when her strenuous devotion to "Art" permitted.

The little nest seemed just the right background for the owner herself, who possessed a wholesome freshness of aspect most attractive to look upon. With her trim and dainty figure, her bright brown hair that would fall into distracting little curls, her charming, wistful brown eyes, and a skin still

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fresh and pink, she reminded one of a hardy little country rose—the sort that climbs over trellises and cottage porches—transplanted to New York, and continuing to bloom indefatigably.

On the morning of the twenty-fourth of December, however, her eyes were clouded with regret and disappointment.

The post—that sometimes most disappointing of messengers—had brought news of illness in the home of cheerful country friends with whom she was wont to spend her holidays; consequently, the little house party was off.

It was tiresome, Miss Althea reflected over her tea and toast, and the thought of a solitary Christmas was anything but cheering.

Her forehead was puckered with thought, as she set about her morning's dusting. She would send off telegrams to two old friends who lived in a dingy little New Jersey town, to come in and dine with her on the morrow. It would be a pleasant change for them. After all, there were plenty of means, no doubt, by which she could cheat dull care, and find happiness in giving pleasure to others.

But, in spite of her excellent resolutions—for somehow theory is so much easier than practice—Miss Althea's thoughts would fly back to a certain Christmas, fifteen years ago.

She was twenty-four, and he was thirty, and the world seemed very young, and life an unbroken promise.

And when Ashton Ronalds, under the mistletoe, that night of Christmas Eve, had suddenly taken her in his arms and kissed her, and then had told her breathlessly that he loved her, and she was the only woman in the world for him—well, in that hour, her heart had opened like a flower to the mystery of love, to the meaning of life and its glorious possibilities—possibilities never, alas, to be realized.

Somehow her brain had managed to pull out a long-closed drawer of the past, and the whole room was filled with the scent and faint sweet odor of these escaping memories.

How could they hurt so after all this time, Miss Althea wondered dumbly.

How cruelly bright and vivid old memories could be—like some of those wonderful old Japanese brocades at the museum, that she had copied for their design, in which the ancient threads of gilt and silver, after the lapse of centuries, still retained their bright integrity.

Does one ever get over a *real* experience, a genuine emotion? Do not those threads, once woven into the texture of life, color forevermore its warp and woof? Even now, spinster of thirty-nine as she was, the memory of that early happiness could thrill her as nothing else in the world could.

Her life was all gray, but the gold thread was there. It would not dull.

And yes, another—the bright scarlet of sharp anguish, the color of the heart's blood. Could any lapse of years erase the memory of that awful hour on the beach?

She had been so obsessed with her own happiness, with her own nest-building plans and hopes, with the satisfying joy of her lover's letters, always so tender, that absence had made no difference to her content.

She had not thought of it as making any difference to him. They both knew that they must expect to have a long engagement, for Art is slow in her rewards, even to a painter of Ashton's acknowledged ability. But when, six months later, he had run down to the seaside town, where she was teaching drawing at one of the girls' schools, she knew by the first sight of his white, miserable face, that something was wrong.

And finally, when he had blurted it all out, desperately, brutally, the stunning, crushing, astounding fact that—he had married his model—she simply could not take it in.

Wretchedly, patiently, he had gone over it again and again. The girl was beautiful—extraordinarily so; he had become suddenly, blindly, madly infatuated—and he had married her.

"And do you *love* her?" Althea had asked tremblingly, with stricken eyes.

"That has nothing to do with it," he had declared hoarsely. "You, Althea,

are a different sort of woman. You could not understand the—the temptation—the fascination.”

But they were going away—together—out to the Far West—to make a new life, a new start. And that, at least, she had heard with a sort of numb thankfulness. He would be out of the East—dead to her, almost as if he had really died. She need never hear of, or see, him again.

She was not of the heroic fiber from which disaster strikes flame, but she had a sturdy pluck and courage of her own.

The glory and the inspiration had gone, and the wings of her dreams had shriveled up forever; but there is always work to do, and work is a great anodyne.

The years had brought a certain sober content, and, except for times like this, when memory took an unfair advantage of her, she believed that she was, on the whole, a genuinely happy and fortunate woman.

Having put the last finishing touches to the studio, Miss Althea determinedly pinned on her hat, and buttoned herself into her coat. She would go out, do some shopping, have her lunch at the club, then call on an invalid friend—and thus put down with a firm hand these futile and unfortunate recollections.

As she started down the long, bare public hall leading to the stairway, she observed that the door of number six, the studio opposite hers, stood open, and the scrubwoman was busily engaged in doing it out.

“Good morning, Wiggins,” she said to the janitor, whom she met on the way down. “I see number six is rented at last.”

“Yes, miss; another artist has taken it. We’ll be quite full up now. He comes in this afternoon.”

“That will be very nice, won’t it?” said Miss Hale, with the little touch of friendliness in her nod and smile that made her so genuinely liked by all servants.

When Miss Althea returned in the twilight, through which powdery flakes of snow were falling, the shadow had quite vanished from her face. Her

cheeks were pink, her eyes were bright, and her arms were laden with greens. As she passed down the passageway again to her own door, she glanced curiously at number six. It was closed, and no light showed through the transom.

She slipped the key in her door, entered, and turned on the light. The scrubwoman had left a good fire, and the warm, bright interior looked so cozy, and sweet, and homelike that it seemed positively a shame to be enjoying it all alone.

Miss Althea put the kettle on the hob, and hung up her holly wreaths. Then, having changed her street dress for a soft, warm tea gown of rose-colored velvet, she pulled up her favorite low chair to the fire, put her little slippers on the brass fender, and was proceeding to cut the pages of a new magazine, when, with uplifted paper knife, she turned her head in a listening attitude.

Was that little cry the mew of some woebegone kitten?

Perhaps it came from the street.

No, from the direction of the corridor. Softly she rose, and looked out. Then she returned to her seat, and picked up her magazine. There it was again! More distinct. It must be somewhere near at hand—poor little beastie! But where? Nearly all the occupants of the Rubens were off in various directions for their holidays. Besides, none of them kept a kitten.

Again the mistress of number seven stood on her threshold in perplexity. Number six was still unlighted.

Ugh! That hall was cold! She shivered, and was about to close her door, when suddenly the cry was repeated. The sound came straight from number six.

Amazed, she crept on tiptoe to the door opposite her own, and bent her head to listen.

Unmistakably it was the soft wail of a child’s voice.

How queer! No light, no sound of footsteps or of a reassuring voice, just those little, wistful, lonely cries, which were becoming more frightened, more peremptory. With a suddenness of intuition that almost startled her, Miss

Althea realized that the weeping baby was hungry, frightened, *alone*, in that great dark studio.

With a thrill of indignation she hesitated no longer, but hurried down the stairs, and sought out the snug, bachelor lair of Wiggins, who listened to her tale with the stolid calm of the seasoned janitor, and then leisurely proceeded to throw light upon the situation.

"Yes, miss, the gentleman in number six has moved in. He came this morning with his van load of furniture—and a baby—but no nurse."

"When was all this?" impatiently.

"Well'm, I should say along about twelve-thirty, though it might 'a' been twenty minutes to one."

"And he has not been back since?" This in tones of righteous indignation.

Wiggins shook his head.

"Not as I knows'm; at least, I haven't seen him since I gave him his key."

"Good gracious! And what time is it now?"

"Just on four'm."

Miss Althea seemed to stiffen with horror.

"And that poor lamb has been deserted for hours and hours, without fire, or light, or food, or—— Wiggins, come with me at once!"

Turning, she caught up the tail of her gown, and fled back up the stairs, the fat janitor stumbling, gasping, protesting in her rear. But his plaintive, breathless appeals for discretion and deliberation fell upon ears deaf to all save the heart-rending wails that filled the gaunt public hall of the fourth floor.

Rage, famine, and fright were rapidly working devastation in the breast of the



"Go on, Wiggins, and turn that poker. I am entering this flat."

wee prisoner of number six, and the terrified, yet peremptory shrieks from those strong baby lungs served but to harden Miss Althea in her resolution to rescue the sufferer at any price.

"Break in the door, Wiggins," she commanded sternly. "There is no time to lose, and no other way for it."

"But reely, if you please'm, don't you think as we had better——" began the janitor helplessly, rolling a beseeching eye on the dauntless little lady to whom the "lor" and "p'lice" presented no terrors.

Miss Althea cut short his argument by suddenly whisking into her own room, and then out again, bearing a long, stout, steel poker in one slim hand.

"Put that into the keyhole, Wiggins, and turn it till something breaks," she ordered, in a tone of iron determination, and with a flash in her eyes before which the strong man quailed.

"But the p'lice'm," he almost groaned,

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as under her steely gaze he inserted the poker, and paused.

"Send the police to me, if they have any objections. I'll settle with *them*! Go on, Wiggins, and turn that poker. I am entering this flat," almost snapped Miss Althea, for a regiment of policemen with drawn bludgeons could not have stopped her now.

Helplessly Wiggins yielded, and under his powerful hands the poker did its work. The lock creaked and snarled, the door swung open, and, with a swoop and little cry, Miss Althea descended upon the occupant of the crib.

"Oh, you poor, patient precious!" she crooned, gathering up the blue-eyed, golden-haired baby into her mothering arms, where the distraught child, half hysterical with prolonged tears, nestled with quivering sobs of contentment.

For a long moment Miss Althea held her so, pressing the hot, tear-stained little face against her own cool, soft cheek, and hushing the last remnants of the recent wild storm with little foolish, soothing words.

And as she stood, her quick eyes rested on a scene of depressing desolation; on furniture of all sorts, and artist's traps huddled into the center of the great room; on a cold hearth and a carpetless floor.

What a home for a helpless little child—and this was Christmas Eve!

Miss Althea shivered, and turned away, to meet the reproachful picture of the still conscience-stricken Wiggins fumbling at the telltale lock.

"It's altogether a bad job'm," he volunteered. "The little 'un's dad is more'n likely to feel rather hotted up when he sees this'm."

"This poor child's father is a—well, he is a *brute*, Wiggins," retorted Miss Althea, with conviction. "It is most likely that we shall neither see nor hear of him again. Leaving you all alone, my blessed darling, to cry your pretty eyes out, didn't he?"

With a quick, tender change of tone, she spoke to her charming burden, to whose flushed cheek she pressed her lips comfortingly.

"Yes, miss," assented Wiggins, without conviction.

As an elderly bachelor person, he gazed unenthusiastically upon Miss Hale's prize. Besides, he was acutely conscious only of the painful fact that he had just broken into another man's domain, and was even in the act of aiding and abetting in something nearly resembling the crime of kidnaping.

"Any further orders, miss?" he inquired gloomily, turning his back upon the ruin, and following his fellow conspirator across the hall.

"Yes; please tell the milkman to leave an extra quart of milk to-morrow morning."

"Thank you'm. Will that be all?"

"Only this," called Miss Althea over her shoulder, as she was about to enter her room. "If that man does return, which I very much doubt, you may send him to me."

"Very good, miss," returned Wiggins, in a tone of relief.

The baby was a much more satisfactory listener and sympathizer than Wiggins. She, at all events, was perfectly satisfied with the state of things, and was plainly fascinated by the fire and the bright colors and the warmth of Miss Hale's little flat.

And presently, having been comforted and fed with warm milk, she graciously allowed her adoring hostess to brush out her golden curls, wash the tear stains from her lovely little face, pull off her shoes and stockings, and warm the darling pink toes at the pleasant fire.

She was like a little fairy princess, all white and gold, with eyes blue as corn flowers, a skin of milk and roses, and the most ravishing dimples.

Never had Miss Althea had such a perfectly lovely time in her life. She played the well-known game of "This little pig's gone to market," to *mademoiselle's* intense delight, and she kissed repeatedly the soft white neck in that delicious spot just under the ear—a performance graciously submitted to by the small maiden. By and by the warmth, and the milk, and the cherishing arms infolding her had their lull-

ing effect, and Miss Baby fell sound asleep on her new friend's shoulder.

A long, long time the two sat there together in the firelight, Miss Althea smiling with tender, wistful eyes.

Those glowing coals and little leaping, quivering flames, like magicians, wove fairy necromancy, transforming the gray loneliness of her life into rose-tinted hues of happiness. The soft breathing of that little heart lying against her own caused long-dead hopes to stir, to come to life, as she tightened her arms with a jealous, loving tenderness round that little, soft, adorable body, and lowered her head until her cheek brushed the sunny, golden curls.

Not to herself would she confess it, but there had risen in her breast a secret, wild, passionate hope that the father would not return. Perhaps he had met with an accident, been run over by a motor car and killed. Such things do happen—terrible, truly, but then——

Oh, how *different* life could be, if one had a little angel like this to work for, to love and cherish, to become an intimate part of one's life!

The dreamer suddenly lifted her head with a guilty start. There were footsteps in the hall—the slow, heavy, shuffling steps of Wiggins—and others. They were coming to her door.

Half dazed, Miss Althea rose unsteadily to her feet, and stood, holding the baby closely in her arms, as she answered "Come in!" to a knock.

The door was flung open, as if by an impatient hand, and a man, with every appearance of dismay and wild-eyed alarm, almost burst into the room.

It was the father, of course, Miss Hale told herself, with a heart dropping like a shot bird with disappointment; not a villain, after all, only a stupid, careless, neglectful man.

He was tall, with shoulders that stooped slightly; his hair was graying at the temples, and his eyes shone out bright and dark.

"Don't wake her," said Miss Hale, speaking with soft imperiousness. "She has just gone to sleep."

She moved a step forward, and the

man, staring at her in astonishment, gave a sudden, stifled exclamation, as the light fell in full radiance upon her face. In her rose-colored gown, and with that startled expression in her eyes, Miss Althea was the girl in appearance that she had been long years ago.

"It's Mr. Ronalds, miss," said Wiggins, stepping forward as master of ceremonies. "I told him as you had the baby, all right."

For a moment the man and woman gazed silently at each other, as if each saw a ghost from another world.

"Althea! Why, Althea!" stammered the man.

But Miss Hale, being a woman, was the first to recover her composure. She turned calmly to the janitor.

"It's all right, Wiggins," she said to that functionary. "You needn't worry about the broken lock. I'll take all the responsibility. This gentleman and I are—old acquaintances. I can make him understand."

"And now, Ashton Ronalds," said she, when the door had closed upon Wiggins, "perhaps you will explain *why* you went off and left this poor baby alone for hours and hours. She might have *died* by this time, if I had not happened to hear her crying." Miss Althea's soft eyes flashed accusing fire upon the wretched man. "Is this the sort of father you are? You don't deserve to *have* a child!"

"I beg that you will listen to me, and not judge me too harshly," said the tall man, feeling like a very small boy before a very stern judge. "It is quite true. I know I deserve almost anything for my neglect——"

"Neglect!" breathed Miss Althea. "Oh, I thought at least there had been an *accident*!"

She sank back into her low chair, and her visitor stood silent a moment, looking down upon the picture of the woman and the child.

"You see," he said, "I went out to look for a nurse I had heard of. But the woman was not at home, and I was hurrying off to an intelligence office, when I met unexpectedly a friend, who



"Don't wake her," said Miss Hale, speaking with soft imperiousness. "She has just gone to sleep."

seemed most anxious to see me. He begged me to step in just for a moment to his club, where there was another man he particularly wanted me to meet, and so——"

"Oh," said Miss Hale again. "A club!"

The tone of an avenging angel could not have expressed more righteous horror.

The man flushed.

"It is not quite so bad as it sounds," he protested apologetically. "It was a great opportunity for me to secure a big commission—I could not afford to let it go. I meant to come away immediately, but—well, we got to talking, and, the truth is, I clean forgot."

"Forgot!" murmured his listener. She instinctively tightened the protecting clasp of her arms.

"This man," continued Mr. Ronalds unhappily, "insisted on carrying us both off to his house, where we could consult about the scheme of decoration, and clinch the matter. It must have taken longer than I realized. All of a sudden, like a shot, I remembered about the baby and the nurse. I rushed off at once, but of course the intelligence offices were all closed. And so I hurried back here, nearly off my head with anxiety, and—and Wiggins told me a lady had heard her crying, and had gone to her rescue——"

He paused, and looked imploringly at

Miss Hale, who kept her eyes unforgettingly fixed upon the fire.

"After all," he remarked, with a smile half humorous, half sad, "I need not have worried. It seems to me Allie has managed to fall on her feet."

"Allie! Is that her name?"

"Yes," stammered her father, with a sudden, self-conscious flush on his thin cheek. "That is—it is Althea—after you," he added awkwardly.

Was it the fire that brought the sudden flame to Miss Althea's startled face? Up to this time she had scarcely thought of the man standing so patiently and humbly by the fire, except as the parent of this little neglected darling. She had almost hated him for coming to claim her. But now, in the long pause that ensued, she stole a glance at him. How changed he was! She noted the stoop, the graying hair above his sunken temples, the sad patience about the lines of his mouth. His life had evidently not been one of entire happiness, either. She wondered where was his wife that he should be wandering about in this helpless fashion with a baby.

"Shall I relieve you now?" he asked, turning toward her, and holding out his arms. "I can't attempt to thank you for—"

"No—no," said Miss Hale quickly, "not yet. I shall first give you a cup of tea. I dare say," smiling, "you forgot that, too. No," shaking her head resolutely, when he would have protested, "you must do as I say. I have not had my own tea yet. The baby made me forget it, so I shall make it for us both."

"You sit here and get warm," said his hostess, after little Allie had been carefully and gently deposited on the divan, and warmly covered up.

How unbelievably strange it seemed, to be sitting here in her own familiar studio, actually giving tea, in a perfectly matter-of-fact way, to the man of whom only a few short hours ago she had thought with such bitter regret, such heartburning emotion! Now, she told herself, the ghost of that old unhappiness was laid. She had only to look at his thin, worn face, his restless,

unhappy eyes, to know that it could never trouble her again. And presently, in response to the warm friendliness of her manner, he told her his story, haltingly and sadly.

"It was not a success, Althea," he admitted. "When I left you, I seemed somehow to have taken the wrong turning in life."

"You went by and by to Europe, did you not?" she asked, in a desperate endeavor to help him out.

"Yes," bitterly, "after I failed in the West. You see, the poor girl wanted money and success, and, the truth is, I could not win either."

"Oh, but, Ashton, you had so much gift, and showed such promise, everybody said."

"Yes, I know, I know—enough for simple wants. A man does not make millions with his brush all at once. We pitched our lives on too expensive a scale from the first. I simply couldn't make the cost of it, so I plunged into journalism, and we tried Paris—Vienna."

He finished with a reckless shrug.

"But the baby?" inquired his listener softly.

"She came just fifteen months ago. I, you see—well, I hoped she would have made poor Sybil happier, but, after years of being disappointed of the gaiety, wealth, and luxury she craved, she resented the kiddie's coming at all."

"Oh, Ashton!" There was a world of meaning, of sympathy, in her tone.

"That's how I came to name her as I did," he resumed. "Sybil left it to me, so I chose to call her Althea, after the best woman her father had ever known. I rather hoped it might bring her luck—and so it has."

He turned to his hostess, as he nodded, half smiling, at the sleeper on the divan.

"And her mother, where is she now?" asked Miss Althea, rising, and suddenly, with quick heartbeats, aware of a tenderness in the eyes bent on her face.

"She died two months after little Allie was born," replied the father. "As soon as the child was old enough to travel, I determined on bringing her

home to America. I wish her to grow up here. My own life is broken and useless. I am forty-five. I cannot expect to do much now. But I have her to live for, and work for; although, perhaps, you will think she has not much of a father."

Miss Althea smiled.

"I had concluded you were a villain of the deepest dye. In fact, I almost hoped you were, and that you would never come back. You see," blushing brightly, and in answer to his look of surprise, "she is such a darling, and I did so *love* the feel of her in my arms."

Althea's father looked at the woman beside him, perhaps with a vague, dawning comprehension of what she had missed—and through him.

"Tell me something about yourself," he said abruptly. "Have you been happy? Has your art brought you any real satisfaction?"

"My art?" laughed Miss Althea, ignoring his first question. "I am only an artist by necessity, not inspiration. I make very nice little flower pieces, and people buy them—fortunately for me. But my real vocation, I am convinced, is to be the matron of an orphan asylum, where I could have my fill of making children happy."

The man's eyes suddenly filled with slow, painful tears.

"Althea, Althea, can you ever forgive me for spoiling your life?" he whispered. "But I have been punished. You don't know how much—you don't know how much!"

"Hush, hush!" murmured Miss Althea, putting out her soft little hand. "This is Christmas Eve. We must not think of a sorrowful past to-night. And you don't know how happy I am. I am glad you have come back, Ashton."

"Are you really?" He turned toward her, his voice rough with emotion.

"Really, really I am," answered his hostess, turning to clear away the tea things. "You must let me be a fairy godmother to your baby. I shall love her dearly."

"Althea," he began, a little hoarsely, "do you know that somehow there never was a day in all those years when,

in a way, your wrongs were not avenged? At least, my dear, never a week slipped by that I did not realize how by my own wrongdoing I had lost the sweetest, truest heart in the world."

The baby on the sofa stirred, and gave a little cry.

Miss Althea sprang toward her, took her in her arms, and hushed her tenderly against her breast. Ronalds followed her.

"We must go now," he said gently. "You have been an angel of goodness."

He bent over to take the child from her arms. But she turned upon him like a ruffled little wren, protecting its nestling.

"What!" she exclaimed indignantly.

"Do you think I am going to let this child go back into that cold barn of a studio of yours to-night? No, indeed, she stays here with me until you have engaged a proper nurse for her. I have already seen how fit you are to be trusted with babies."

It was of no avail for Ronalds to laugh and protest. Miss Althea was inexorable.

"And now, you may kiss Althea good night," said she innocently, holding the sleeping baby high in her arms.

But the man, bending low, did not offer to touch the little cheek. Instead, he looked into Miss Althea's eyes.

"You said," he murmured, in a tone of humility and pleading, "you said that I might kiss Althea good night. Do you think I might kiss the Althea I have always loved?"

Somehow, his arm gathered in both Altheas, and held them close.

"Do you remember?" he whispered. "Fifteen years is a long time, but we are together once more. And never again to be parted, please Heaven!"

Miss Althea lifted her head, and her sweet eyes were filled with tears that shone like jewels.

"Oh, Ashton," she breathed, "isn't it a beautiful world? And this is the very happiest Christmas of my life!"

His arm drew her closer.

"Come back to the fire," he said, with tender imperativeness. "I want to talk."

SHUFFLING TUTE into the PACK

By Holman F. Day



ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

CAP'N AARON SPROUL, late of the deep sea, entertained for lawyers an antipathy that was spiced liberally with fear. He classed lawyers, lightning, and pneumonia together.

But Cap'n Aaron Sproul, as involuntary and unwilling president of "The Thrill-of-Life Spring Water Company," felt that his ticklish position required the poultice of the law.

The first half hour of his interview with the lawyer whom he had selected was so much in the nature of an explosion, with especially loud detonations marking the names of Hiram Look, Barnum Speed, Zealor Tute, and certain other "land pirates," that Squire Emery was at last obliged to call for less thunder and more facts.

"I gather that the situation is something out of the ordinary, but I don't seem to get the meat of the matter," stated the lawyer. "Suppose you state the facts without so many—well, so many personal details. They sort of obscure the main view."

Cap'n Sproul stifled prompt resentment. He drew a long breath.

"From what I've said to date you get a general idea of how I feel about the thing?" he inquired.

"No doubt whatever, Captain Sproul. You have a fine command of language."

"Well, then, the talk hasn't been wasted. If you're goin' to take this case I want you to feel just the same as I do. I realize I've been sailin' full and by with more washin' up than she could carry. But I can reef talk when it's needed."

He shook his fist toward the lawyer.

"Hime Look ain't able to relish his vittles unless he's got a fake of some kind in full operation. It's what comes of being a circus man all your life. Along cruises a feller named Barnum Speed, and what one couldn't think of the other did. Proposition they put up to me was to develop a spring of water on a timber tract Hiram and I own in company. I was 'tendin' to my own business at the time, and didn't pay much attention to what they said, anyway. Sounded innocent enough. If Hime Look would set down to a business of peddlin' spring water, I was glad to have him. They put me in president when I wasn't lookin'. Then what did they do? They started a piece in the papers that an old feller named Tute had discovered a real spring of life on our land, and had been made young again, and they sent out letters by the bushel, and signed my name to 'em as president; and I've got more'n a thousand letters back that if the water ain't as represented I'll be held responsible."

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"You might have promptly withdrawn as president, and disclaimed connection," suggested the lawyer.

"What, chase a newspaper yarn that was copied into every paper between here and Patagonia, and spend all the rest of my life writin' letters to blasted old dyspeptics and baldheads? I tell you, I've got other plans for my declinin' years. I've done what I could to protect myself. I went up onto that timber tract where they're operatin' that spring. I'm just back from there. She's a-goin' full blast!"

"But selling pure water to the public is not a heinous offense, captain."

"I've had that side of it dinged at me by them fellers up there," snorted the cap'n disgustedly. "'Pure water, good air, and plenty of wholesome grub,' say they, 'will cure half the sick folks in the world.' But that ain't the point, squire. It's that Spring of Life end to it. They've gone to work and got a Tute—not a real one, a fake. An old half-wit that they hired from some cheap, hoss-jockey sort of fellers. Hiram has dolled him up with dyed whiskers, and has stuffed him with steak until he feels young again. And they've put electric batteries in the cave where the spring is, with a skin-game doctor to operate same, and make folks think that the water is full of the juice of eternal life; and they're takin' in patients at fifty dollars a week; and Tophet is goin' to break loose up there, just as sure as mermaids can't be fished for with pork scraps. And my name onto everything as 'Cap'n Aaron Sproul, President.' Some folks wait till they get into State prison before they buy law. I'm dickerin' for my law right now, before I get in."

Squire Emery tapped his false teeth with his penstock, and gazed long at the ceiling. Then he asked for the literature which the energetic Mr. Speed had sent out to intending patrons over Cap'n Sproul's signature.

"He calls that artistic advertisin'," growled the president, slapping the circulars upon the lawyer's desk. "Says that modern advertisin' has to be built so as to wake folks up."

"Probably argues that the end justifies the means," observed the lawyer, skimming the pages. "Said end being to induce folks to drink plenty of your spring water, and lead healthy lives, boarding on the hilltop in your timber tract. This is all very skillfully worded, Captain Sproul. The weak point in the project is the faking of the man Tute. Of course, the story of him in the first place gave your Spring of Life a wonderful send-off—plenty of free advertising. But he now becomes a dangerous proposition. He would loom pretty large as an exhibit in case of a suit for the recovery of money gained under false pretenses."

"I've tried to bribe him and bulldoze him," affirmed the cap'n. "But he's too well satisfied with the grub and his wages. And Hime Look wouldn't stay in the thing unless there was a fake hitched onto it."

"That makes Mr. Look an unsafe partner. Here's my advice to you, captain. As president, and chiefly responsible, eliminate Tute first of all. Abduct him, if necessary. Get him out of the way of possible meddlers. Then let your partners go ahead, and sell spring water."

"I don't care what they sell, if I don't get dragged into court for cheatin' my fellow man, and all my property sued away from me by them that have been cheated."

"Then get Tute out of sight. I read the newspaper accounts at the time the story was first told, and remember that the 'Spring of Life' idea was played up prominently. Hide Tute, and leave that end of the case an open question. Perhaps, after this first flurry of popular interest, your spring water company will die a natural and easy death. The public soon loses interest in such things. And you'll be let out of possible complications in quite a natural fashion," concluded the lawyer sagely.

Cap'n Aaron Sproul paid his fee that day with the feeling that he had really received something for his money. The elimination of the grotesque Tute from the "Spring of Life" situation had been in his mind ever since he had stood by

watching Hiram Look paint youth into the whiskers of their company "trade-mark." Now the law advised and sanctioned the removal of Tute, chief danger in case of an exposure. The cap'n journeyed back up country, scowling into vacancy while he pondered on ways and means.

When he arrived at last on the wooded hilltop, where the waters of the Thrill-of-Life Spring plashed in their cavern, he found his partners busier and more optimistic than ever. The scene was distinctly lively for a sylvan solitude. Men were erecting portable houses, and there were several strangers who were roaming about doing nothing.

"The first batch of patients," explained Hiram genially. The cap'n surveyed them sullenly and suspiciously, fearing spies. For Zealor Tute was strolling with them, expatiating on the wonders of the Spring of Life. "Yes, s'r, patients! They won't even wait when we write, and tell 'em to wait. It shows what advertisin' can do, Aaron!

"We'll have six of them portable houses up and ready by to-morrow, and I've telegraphed for more. Plenty of tents, too. I'm goin' to make 'em sleep in the fresh air. Fresh air, fresh water, and good grub"—he spoke now in lowered tones—"will make 'em feel the thrill of life. They'll think they're growin' young. We're doin' a noble work. There ain't a thing to object to, and I wish you'd get that cussed, sour, disagreeable look off'm your face. Our early advertisin' was a little dite lively, I'll admit that. But you've got to wake folks up in this world in order to make 'em grab in on what's really good for 'em."

Cap'n Sproul still glowered at Z. Tute, his mind occupied with plans for eliminating that feature of their advertising.

"Fifteen more patients comin' to-morrow," said Hiram complacently. "Now, if we had just simply advertised summer board and pure water, do you suppose for one minute we'd be havin' any such rush as this? Would they come peltin' up into these woods, ready to rough it? Not on your life! And

when they see Tute, and hear him talk, and he turns a few flipflops, and jumps up and cracks his heels, and tells 'em he used to be seventy-two before he drank that water, then patients ain't growlin' about accommodations or grub. They're shakin' hands all round, and sayin' how glad they are they've come."

"You've got it all fixed firm and solid in your mind, have you, that you can't run this thing without a flimflam hitched on to it?" demanded the president. "Got to have that old, dyed-up, half-witted jeesiferus, have you, to lie to people now, and get us into trouble later?"

"You ain't to blame, I suppose, for what you don't know," retorted Hiram calmly. "But seein' that you're president of this company, I'm willin' to post you on a few things you ought to know. A patient is half cured when his mind is put in the right shape. They come here, and see Tute, and hear him talk, and notice how spry and fresh he is, and they think the spring water done it, and half the battle is won for 'em. By the time they've et three square meals, and stepped in the puddle in that cave, and got a good, hearty buzz of the thrill of life from that battery—thinkin' it's the mysterious power of nature—then they perk. And to make 'em perk is what we're here for."

Cap'n Sproul started to make further comments, but Hiram snapped him up short.

"I haven't got any more time to spend battin' feathers back and forth between us. I've a crew to boss, and business to 'tend to." He waved his hand at the men who were bolting the portable houses into position. "If you can find anything to do as president of this company, Mister Sproul, I'd advise you to get into the game."

The president of the Thrill-of-Life Spring Water Company accepted that advice. Five minutes later he had Tute by the arm, and was leading him away down the tote road.

Their departure had not been noticed. The other officers of the company were absorbed in the affairs of a particularly busy day.

At the end of a mile of silent marching, Mr. Tute hung back. The cap'n set his teeth, growled a threat, set his fist into the slack of Mr. Tute's coat, and propelled him.

"I'm bein' took off'n my job, and I hain't goin' no farther," quavered the victim of abduction.

"Seein' that I'm president of the com-

never before encountered a master mariner in a rage.

If Tute lagged or looked behind him, the cap'n gave him a monitory poke with the end of the stake, and apostrophized him in the name of the president of the Spring of Life Company.

"And if you have any doubt of my bein' that president, you try hangin' back on me, and see what happens," suggested the cap'n at intervals.

But when three men met them suddenly at the turn of the road, after an hour of this progress, Mr. Tute halted, and Cap'n Sproul was too thoroughly taken aback to keep his charge on the march. For the three men were those who had captured and sold Zealor Tute into his willing bondage. They had swung into sight so suddenly that the cap'n had no time to hide the fact that he was driving Tute as one drives a steer to market.

"He's stealin' me! I want to be saved! He's teamin' me away from my job!" squealed Tute.

"You know me," said Cap'n Sproul, fixing the three staring men with a steely gaze that he divided among them. "I'm president of the Spring of Life Company, ain't I? Get out of the road, and let us pass along."

But the three did not yield.

"We were comin' up to call in and see how everything was progressin', and see if goods we furnished you was O. K.," stated the spokesman, patting Tute on the shoulder, to indicate "goods."

"Bein' president, I'll inform you that everything *is* satisfactory," returned the cap'n.

He poked Tute with his stick, and ordered him to move on.

"We done our business with Messrs. Look and Speed, and our money was paid to us by them," objected the agent.



"You try hangin' back on me, and see what happens," suggested the cap'n at intervals.

pany that hires you, I don't want any back talk," said Cap'n Sproul grimly.

For the next half mile Tute sagged so limply in the clutch of his captor that the cap'n's strength and temper began to give out. He picked up a stake that had fallen from some lumberman's sled, gave Tute a kick that set that unhappy person well ahead in the path, and drove him on. Tute found this mien too terrific to be resisted. He had

"We furnished aforesaid goods for a partickler purpose—said purpose bein' to stay by the spring, and eat, and grow fat, and look young, and crack up the water. We ain't disposed to see him galloped around over the country, and the meat took off'm him. He'll be turned back onto our hands. And, furthermore, he's our dear relative, and we——"

"Don't ye try to come any of your dear-relative business on me!" roared the cap'n. "He's no more related to you three sculpins than I'm first cousin of a mermaid. You shanghaied him off'm a wood-sawin' job, and sold him to Hime Look like you'd peddle sausages. I'm usin' him now on business of the company of which I'm president, and I order you to back out of that road."

But the three did not back. They surrounded the appealing Mr. Tute, and started him on his return toward camp.

"You hit any one of us with that stick," advised the spokesman, over his shoulder to the frothing president, "and it'll take more'n one dose of Spring o' Life water to put the thrill of life back onto your keel."

The march back to camp was silent, and without incident. The president marched as file closer, nursing murderous ponderings.

"Well," demanded the indignant Hiram, after he listened to Tute and the spokesman of the rescuing party, "what in damnation did you think you were doin' with one of the principal assets of this company, Mister Sproul?"

"I was pickin' up a dynamite bomb, and gettin' rid of it before some one come along here and lighted the fuse," declared the cap'n doggedly. "I was tryin' to save the officers of this company from goin' to State prison."

"It looks to me," suggested one of the purveyors of Tute, "as though a sharper eye ought to be kept on things here in the interests of our dear relative, and it's up to us to keep it."

"If he stands the chance of bein' stolen every now and then, and rammed around over the country," observed an-

other of the three sullenly and firmly, "it's worth more'n what we cal'lated on in the first agreement. We ain't the kind that blabs, nor exposes, nor anything of the sort, but we've got to be used businesslike. Considerin' danger, and wear and tear, and trouble of returnin' said Tute, it's our opinion we've got to be paid fifty more apiece, or else trade is off."

Hiram Look understood a threat, and knew danger when he saw it. After stormy protest, he pulled his wallet, and paid, as treasurer of the Spring of Life Company. He sandwiched his remarks with some very frank statements regarding the general mental equipment of the president of said company. After the complaining Tute had been fed into h's normal condition of sprightliness, and his devoted "relatives" had been sent away, partly mollified by a square meal, by promises, and the money, Hiram had a word to say to Cap'n Sproul.

"I don't know where it was you went a few days ago, when you disappeared out of these diggin's, but wherever it was I wish you'd go there again and stay. You're a hoodoo to honest enterprise so long as you stay around here."

But the cap'n did not take that advice. The law which he had bought on his trip down country had not worked well enough to suggest a second trip to Squire Emery. And, furthermore, the arrival of four whiskered strangers engrossed his prompt attention, for these strangers announced that they had not come as patients. They held their first conversation with Manager Barnum Speed, and on the conclusion of the interview that brisk young man had taken steps to isolate Mr. Tute promptly and effectually. Then Mr. Speed reported to his associate officers.

"We're up against something I hadn't figured on," he informed the sullen cap'n and the astonished Hiram. "That advertising seems to be working too blasted well. They're four professors of biology, that's what those four old hair mattresses are."

"New one on me," confessed Hiram.

"It was on me for a minute," Speed owned up. "But they say the science



The shape arose, flung off the blanket, and darted out of doors into the night.

of biology is being hep to what makes life, and keeps it going, and so forth. So they've come up here to lay Tute under the microscope. Told me they didn't put any particular stock in the newspaper yarns, but considered it their duty to come up here to investigate. They don't believe anybody can grow young again. So we're starting in with the odds against us. Now, gents, what are we going to do?"

"Boot 'em off the reservation," advised Hiram truculently.

"Won't do," said the manager, with firmness. "They'll get our goat if we ain't polite to 'em."

"Spend some more money," counseled the president satirically. "That seems to be the favorite style up here. Buy them off, or else dicker with them three hoss jokeys for a fresh Tute about thirty years old, and tell 'em the spring water has backed him down so far,

startin' at seventy, and then be ready with a ten-year-old six months from now. So long's we're in the flimflam business, we might as well go it good and plenty. When we get into State prison we might as well stay there."

"Let's not go to splashing," snapped Speed. "Jokes better be barred just now. We're up against it. The patients here want to believe in Tute—it helps them that much. Dyed whiskers are so much sunshine for them. But when those old four-eyes get to lamping him! It won't go, eh, Hiram?"

"I didn't paint him to be pawed over by scientificers," Hiram acknowledged gloomily.

"All is, Tute has got to be shuffled back into the pack almighty sudden," stated the brisk Mr. Speed. And when his copartners blinked inquiry, he added: "Hid, shunted, passed out of the back door with a good excuse hitched onto his disappearance until we can get rid of those professors."

"Did you smell this squall comin', with that deep-sea nose of yours?" inquired Hiram, giving the cap'n the first amiable glance in weeks.

"I'm settin' here at the ticket window, ready to take in apologies," said the cap'n stiffly. "And after apologies are taken in I'll gaffe that Tute again by the scruff of his neck, and——"

But he stopped, realizing that the venom in his tones had betrayed a deeper interest in Tute than the presence of the professors could account for.

"It's up to me to handle Tute," announced Hiram, veiling his suspicion of the cap'n's interest. "He's got con-

fidence in me. He looks to me for his money. I can slip him away, and keep him contented."

"Afraid to let me finish a good job that I began in good shape?" demanded Cap'n Sproul.

"That ain't the point," hedged his friend. "But you know what will happen if you tackle Tute again to-day. And after you had wrassled him off'm these premises in nine beautiful tableaux to quick music, do you think me and Speed could set down and explain that riot to them professors? I insist that I'm the right one to shuffle Tute."

This was not all of what the cap'n had hoped for in the way of Tute's elimination, but it was something. He made no further protest.

"I know a place to hide him in," Hiram proceeded. "Set the doc on them professors, get 'em into the cave lookin' at the spring, and then, when you come to hunt for Tute, tell 'em he's a rovin' character, here to-day and there to-morrow, on account of his new youth and high spirits—and let the patients loose on 'em about how spry he is. It ain't much of a bluff, but it's all I can think of at short notice."

"I give up the wheel right here," proclaimed Cap'n Sproul, glaring at Speed. "It's your watch on deck. I haven't ever had liar's papers granted to me. Go ahead and steer."

While he sat apart, smoking in moody silence, he got some comfort out of the spectacle of Hiram and Tute slipping cautiously away into the forest. But Speed came to him later in surly gloom.

"That story about Tute isn't making any kind of a hit with 'em," he confessed. "They're up here to see Tute, and they're going to be peevish if they don't see him. If they go away and pass some highbrow talk to the newspapers about finding no Tute here, it's going to hurt us. The public loves to lap up professor talk."

"I hope what they say will bust the concern, provided the bust doesn't land us in State prison," stated the cap'n, with venom.

"Nothing like having an enthusiastic president for a company, if you plan to

make a success out of it," affirmed Mr. Speed.

"He can't turn in near as much business as a progressive and able-bodied liar," retorted Cap'n Sproul.

Hiram returned alone at nightfall, and the perspiring Speed turned the doubting professors over to a big man, who cocked his silk hat at an assertive angle, stuffed complimentary cigars into their hands, and informed them with an air that really produced an impression on their previous incredulity that the rejuvenated Mr. Tute had gone away to get married.

"As treasurer of the Spring of Life Company," Hiram assured them, "I went out to the village with him to buy him a wedding outfit, with the compliments of our concern. That's the way we do business!"

The professors were plainly impressed by this news. They were so much impressed that they announced they would engage board at the Spring of Life Company's camps, and spend their vacation there awaiting Mr. Tute's return.

"I wish they'd go back to Missouri. It's plain they belong there," said Mr. Speed, at the final and private conference of the partners that night. "The new patients who are coming will be peeved if we don't show Tute to 'em. All we can do, though, is hold tight, and tucker the profs."

It was near midnight when that conference ended, and the only light was in the camp of the company's officers. Straight to that light, and into the camp, like unwelcome night moths, came a party of four men. The party was made up of Mr. Tute and his assiduous "relatives."

"It was announced by us that we proposed to keep an eye on movements here," said the spokesman, breaking upon the silence of stupefaction that marked their entrance. "We've kept that eye out, and here we are. And we're here to find out what this company means by razoo'in' our property around over the country. It was understood his job was here, and our rake-off per month comes from havin' him

here. You're tryin' to double cross us, that's what!"

"Why didn't you stay hid where I hid you?" Hiram demanded, towering above Tute.

"Hid him, hey?" broke in the leader of the three. "That's just what I suspected. But you needn't think you can hide our property anywhere in this section of country where we can't find it. We're keepin' our eye out, gents!"

"Look-a-here," raged Hiram, and he twisted his heavy hand into the collar of the spokesman's coat, "I'm dead onto this blackmail game you're tryin' to work on us. It's none of your condemned business how we use Tute, so long as we use him right, and pay him his wages, and give your rake-off to you all regular each month. You take him back, and leave him where you found him."

"He's going to be left right here," insisted the other. "You can't catch us that way. We'd be committin' ourselves, we'd be responsible for him, and he'd be turned onto our hands. Furthermore, we want to be paid for the trouble we've been put to to-night."

Once again, after stormy discussion, Hiram, treasurer of the company, pulled and paid. He realized that he was dealing with a situation that must not be jarred very much at that critical juncture.

"I tell you, Tute has got to be shuffled back into the pack," asserted Speed, two hours later.

The conference between the partners was still on. The "relatives" had departed, patting their pockets, and Mr. Tute snored on a shakedown in the corner.

"This time it has got to be done good and proper," stated Hiram, with decision.

"I started to do it, and it would have been done to the queen's taste," volunteered Cap'n Sproul. "Give the job over to me, and there won't be any more of this peekaboo business."

He was eager, for the admonition of the law he had "bought" spurred him.

Mr. Tute ceased to snore, but in their absorption in the business of the mo-

ment the officers of the Spring of Life Company paid no attention to him.

"There's no two ways about it—the thing now is to put him under, and buckle the strap on him," said Hiram. "I'll take my share of the blame for him, but I didn't figger he'd complicate things so much. If you think you can put him out of sight, cap'n, you'd better take the job. Speed is needed here, and I don't seem to have much luck."

Mr. Tute had one fishy eye open, and an ear cocked above the edge of the blanket.

The grim man who had teamed him away into the woods in that masterful and violent fashion was now scowling in the dim light with most demoniac demeanor.

"You leave him to me," that man was saying. "His 'relatives' won't dig him up this time."

Mr. Tute, his blanket still on his back as he rolled, got onto his hands and knees. He started in that fashion for the door. His peanut mind shivered with fear. He had been delivered to this ogre in human form.

"I reckon I know who my friends be," he gasped, and when the three whirled to intercept the shadowy shape, scooting on hands and knees along the camp wall, the shape arose, flung off the blanket, and darted out of doors into the night, leaving a shrill whoop of terror behind him.

"Don't forget to mention in your next ad that you sign my name to," sneered Cap'n Sproul, when he had recovered his breath after the fruitless chase, "that our Spring of Life water will make a man two parts grasshopper and one part eel."

"Well, so long as he had to be shuffled into the pack, and has gone to work and shuffled himself there, I don't know but what it is just as well," grumbled Speed. "I don't know where he was going, but he certainly was on his way when I saw him last."

"He's gone back to them blackmail hellions, that's where he's gone," stormed Hiram, "but this time he's gone of himself, and I'm shut of him. They don't get another dollar out of me. If



"Write down," dictated the master of ceremonies, "'Received this day one Z. Tute from A. Sproul, in good order, and right side up with care!'"

they show up here again we don't know 'em, and never heard of the fake Tute they are teaming. I'll get a Tute next time without so many strings tied onto him. This thing has self-acted itself just right for us. Practice makes perfect. Let me try it again, and I'll have a Tute that'll back even those professors into a corner."

Cap'n Sproul decided in his own mind that there would be no more Tutes in that company, but he made no remarks on the subject.

For two days thereafter matters moved serenely and busily in the domain of the Spring of Life Company. The professors were having such a good time exploring the open that they refrained from any impertinent meddling in the affairs of healing. Speed and his assistant, "the doc," dared to re-establish their batteries in the cave of the spring, and barefooted patients were led through the Spring of Life puddle, squealed in mingled fear and delight when they felt the current, and came out much impressed with the potent mystery of it all. The absence of "Trade-mark Tute" did not produce the effect that Hiram had feared. In fact, Hiram acknowledged that things

seemed to be moving all right without Tute.

"It's the early advertisin' that counted, and he fitted fine in that," Hiram affirmed in his own praise. "I'm goin' to agree now with you, Aaron. I'm glad we're rid of him."

Under those conditions, Cap'n Sproul lost most of his initial acerbity. He even owned up under pressure that the Spring of Life Company might develop into a good thing, provided no more "monkey-doodle business" were attempted in connection with it.

Therefore the reappearance of the three solicitous "relatives" of Tute on the third day of peace and prosperity was not welcome. This time they did not have Tute in their possession. They were solemn, baleful, and accusatory. They lined themselves up before the officers of the Spring of Life Company, and asked where Tute was.

"We have kept our eye out," averred the spokesman sternly. "We said we should do so. We know he ain't here. The question is, Where is he?"

"It's quite a question with us, too," said Hiram airily, and with the ease of one who believes himself rid of a bad bargain. "He ran away, all of his own

accord. We don't know where he is. Furthermore, we don't want to know."

"Well, it's up to you to know. It's goin' to be better for you if you do know." The spokesman stuck up his fingers, and turned them down, one after the other, as he stated facts. "We've caught you tryin' to dispose of Tute—twice we've caught you, by keepin' our eye out. You wanted to get rid of Tute. Tute didn't want to be got rid of. He was gettin' good wages for the best job he ever had in his life. First time we saved him was when your president was bangin' him away into the woods with a club. Second time your treasurer had him tied up in a barn like a steer, goin' to starve him to death."

"You lie! I was goin' to lug grub to him," insisted Hiram hotly.

"Facts speak for themselves. *Now* we don't know *where* he is. How is that goin' to sound when it gets to a jury?"

"A jury!" gasped Hiram.

"That's what I said. Do you suppose we are goin' to stand by and see a relative disappear into the grave without reportin' it? We want Tute! We demand Tute! If we don't get him we'll go to the county attorney. And the grand jury of this county sets next week!"

For the next ten minutes Hiram Look rose nobly to the occasion, so far as oburgation went; and his opinion of blackmailers was well expressed, and to the point. But the three merely gazed at him with cold and accusing eyes; and at the end of the oration demanded Tute and threatened the law.

Barnum Speed had been pondering during Hiram's discourse. Now he drew his brother officers aside.

"We know we haven't touched or harmed the old fool," he said. "Let 'em go ahead, and complain, and indict. They can't convict unless they find the body. There's something or other in the law about *corpus delictorum*, or words to that effect. Meanin' that you've got to have a body to prove murder. A good lawyer will string it along

for us. All we've got to do is put our property out of our hands, and——"

"Fifteen seconds more of this, and I'll be a ravin' lunatic," blazed Cap'n Sproul. "Us fight a murder case? What in the name of the wild-eyed cat-fit are you——"

But Mr. Speed interrupted in his turn.

"Advertising, man! Advertising!" He slapped the cap'n on the shoulder. "They can't convict. But every paper in this country will be full of the Spring of Life. All our other advertising will look like a Sunday-school tract beside the full account of the San Francisco earthquake. And all made right for us in the end, with the Spring of Life a household word! Where's your enterprise and snap?"

Zest in the fresh possibilities was beginning to dawn on Hiram's countenance. The cap'n fell back a few steps, and divided frenzied stares between the treasurer and the manager of his company.

"Advertisin', hey?" he choked. "That's what you're lookin' for, is it? That's been the idee from the start, hey? Old Tute made young, and now Tute murdered? If that's the notion, let's make a clean sweep, and get some fun out of it. Burn them three relatives at the stake, here, and invite the professors to join us in a war dance around 'em. Then put that into the papers, and sign my name to it."

"Wouldn't wonder at anything you might do next," volunteered one of the three. They had overheard the cap'n's outburst.

"There's no call for slurring a good advertising scheme," insisted Speed. "No harm is going to come out of it when the shakedown comes at the end."

"No harm!" shouted Cap'n Sproul. "Me, a respectable, retired shipmaster, with a good wife and a happy home, dragged into this mess by the ears in the first place, my name signed to a lot of lies about a spring of life, and now in a way to be held up to this whole country as the murderer of an old, dyed-whisker idiot! Hime Look, if you ever speak to me again in this

world, ever look at me as though you knowed me, I'll live up to the reputa-tion you're tryin' to give me, and the nearest cor-ner will get a job on what pieces of you are left!"

He drove his hat down over his ears with a clap of his broad hand, and stamped out of the cabin in which the conference had been held. He did not hesitate when he reached the open air. He strode away down the tote road.

"It's a case of go buy more law, and tell Louada Murilla before any other news gets to her," he muttered.

But his pace moderated as he went down the hill. His head was bent forward, and his eyes were set in deep thought. He stopped several times, and listened. At last, with the appearance of having decided on a course of action, he stepped aside from the road, and hid himself in some moosewood bushes.

He waited a full hour ere the "relatives" appeared. He marked their faces. They were sullen. It was plain that no compromise had been arrived at. According to what their faces indicated, Hiram and Speed had decided to continue their advertising campaign, and were blind to possible consequences.

The three mumbled as they walked, and when Cap'n Sproul emerged into the road behind them, and followed at a safe distance, he found no trouble in keeping on their track along the forest trails.

The pursuit was a protracted one, for



"You're workin' on a wrong clew," he advised them gently.

they left the main road, and threaded the woods by devious paths. But they entered a deserted logging camp at last.

Cap'n Aaron Sproul had never been a man to weigh chances when his mind was set on a thing. He armed himself with a couple of stout cudgels, went up to the camp, and kicked open the door.

There was Zealor Tute in the bosom of his "family."

"This 'keepin' an eye out' seems to be a pretty profitable business in this section," stated the cap'n grimly. "I've just been keepin' one out myself. Now, look-a-here," he shouted, detecting signs of belligerency, "I'm quite a man in a rough and tumble, and I'm used to tacklin' Portygee sailors in bunches. So come on, if that plan suits you!"

They hesitated then.

"There ain't any need of enterin' into explanations to me," the cap'n went on. "Havin' exhausted most of the salable qualities of Tute on the hoof, as far as we were concerned, you were cal'latin' to dicker his ghost off to us. I could say a lot, but I haven't got time to waste."

He shifted both cudgels into one hand, fumbled in his pockets, and threw

a pencil and notebook at the man who had constituted himself leader of the "relatives."

"Havin' been high sheriff of a county for some years," he went on, "I can tell you with consid'able heft in what I say that it's State prison for blackmail in this State, just the same as it is for murder. But you and me won't have more trouble about matters in general than we can help. A word to the wise is sufficient, and so forth. You write in that book what I tell you to write."

There was a moment of silence. Then the amanuensis licked the end of the lead pencil with air of surrender.

"Write down," dictated the master of ceremonies, "'Received this day one Z. Tute from A. Sproul, in good order, and right side up with care!' Date it, and the whole of you sign it."

They signed, and the man who had written returned the book sullenly.

"And now a pleasant good day," said Cap'n Sproul. "I've bought some law on this thing, and I've done what the lawyer ordered, and I'm feelin' good, and hope you are all feelin' the same."

"We're feelin' first class," taunted the spokesman. "Glad to give you the writin'. We've got Tute. We want Tute. We'll show that Tute ain't anything but a fake. And where will your old Spring of Life be then?"

"Wherever it is, I shan't go hunting for it," observed Cap'n Sproul.

He marched out of the camp.

"We'll bust that business up," yelled the chief "relative" from the threshold.

"You want to be quick about it," retorted the cap'n.

It was late in the evening when he entered the domain of the Thrill-of-Life Spring Water Company. He had no trouble in avoiding observation. He marched around the cabins, holding to the edge of the woods, climbed the hillside, and entered the cave where the spring was located. He deposited something in its innermost recesses, lighted a match, and ran away, leaving something sputtering in fiery and vicious fashion behind him.

He was safely under the edge of a distant cliff when the crash came. It

was an explosion which rocked the hillside, and, after the fragments had finished smashing down among the trees, he joined his partners and their patients at the scene of the upheaval.

The cave was a dismantled hole in the ground, choked with riven granite; and over the ruins stood Hiram Look, declaiming to Barnum Speed that he knew just who did it, and that he would have them in jail before morning.

The president of the company slid his right hand into the hook of the general manager's elbow, his left hand took hold of the treasurer, and he drew them away into the gloom.

"You're workin' on a wrong clew," he advised them gently. "It wasn't Tute, and it wasn't his relatives. I did it myself, with my little dynamite. And just as long as the supply of dynamite holds out in this country, I'll keep doin' it, if you ever try to start this concern up again. And you can get out advertisin', and sign my name to it, statin' so."

Hiram broke away from him, and stamped around in circles—for language could not express his wrath.

"I don't know what we're going to tell those patients," lamented Speed.

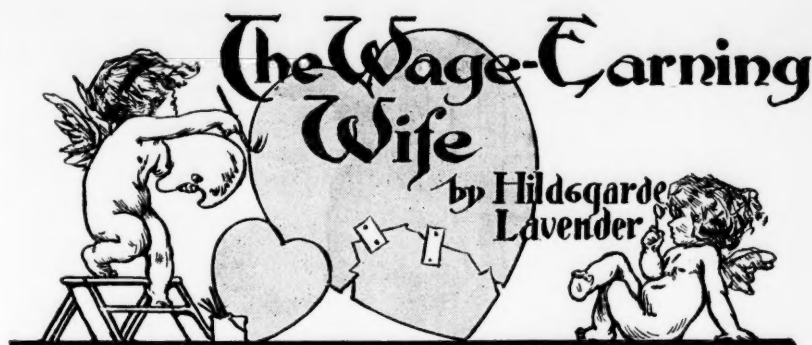
"Tell 'em it's one of the mysteries of nature, and that this whole hill is likely to fly off in hunks next time—and sign my name to it. You won't have to tell 'em anything else. They'll leave, and the others won't come."

Cap'n Sproul continued to be gently admonitory, but there was no mistaking his determination.

"When it gets so a man can't make interest on his investments without painting up whiskers on a fool, and lyin' about water, and bein' indicted for murder, it's time to get into some other business," he advised.

"Whatever business I ever get into again, I'll see to it that you never get in with me!" roared Hiram. "You damnation old pickled herrin'! You belong off in the middle of the sea, eatin' salt hoss, and squintin' at clouds."

"If that resolution of yours is only stuck to, I'll consider I'm well paid for wear and tear up to date," stated the cap'n, with feeling.



ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER

IN those weighty tomes, the reports of the Bureau of Industry, she is probably neatly docketed, her wages estimated, her numbers calculated, her influence for better-or-worse industrialism duly set forth—the wage-earning wife. Not, you understand, the wife considered as a wage earner because she is housekeeper, nursery maid, cook, seamstress, sick nurse, social secretary, and a few other things in a family; but the wife considered as a wage earner because she is doctor, lawyer, merchant, artist, washerwoman, head of a settlement, writer, lecturer, or whatnot—the wife considered as a wage earner because she receives actual gold of the realm in return for her labors, and does not merely have them set down in a parallel column opposite the expenses of her lodging and “keep.”

It is not of her numbers that I am going to talk—the statisticians will tell us all about that aspect of the case—nor about the way in which she complicates the industrial situation, lowering men's wages, raising the standards of what is required from them—the political economists will tell us all about that; nor whether it is a good or bad thing for the race that there should be so many wage-earning wives—that is a question on which the pathologists can talk. But merely about a few of the minor trials of the wage-earning wife, who, every one will admit, exists in large enough numbers in every class of society to

merit every sort of consideration; the trifling as well as the serious.

I had just come home from Belinda's, and at first I thought of Belinda's situation as individual, not typical; Belinda being an illustrator of parts, and the wife of an excellent husband, whose business I understand to be connected with the importation of linen or the exportation of cotton; something substantial and worth while, but not, to my way of thinking, vastly more important than the art of making people laugh and cry by the portrayal of funny scenes and tragic scenes in everyday life, which art is Belinda's.

Belinda had sent word to the drawing-room to ask me to come to her studio at the top of the house; and there I found her, frowzled, tousled, tired looking, surrounded by the materials of her calling. The room glared with ugly light—it was late on a dull winter afternoon. Altogether Belinda should have been free for hours past from her studio, and should have been in the delicately lighted drawing-room, with its fire, and its flowers, and its tea table, awaiting the arrival of its Sheffield tray and of its mistress.

“I'm driven to death,” wailed Belinda. “You won't mind if I keep on. The Bardens have extended my time twice on this order; it's their new Dickens I'm illustrating. Don't you remember I went over in August to make the sketches? Love it? Of course, I loved



"I'm driven to death," wailed Belinda.

it then. But I haven't had three unbroken days to finish my sketches since we got home, and the Bardens are growing impatient. I simply hate to be sloppy about work, too——"

She trailed off into a frowning silence, and gave all her morose attention to a sketch of the green from which Miss Trotwood used to drive the encroaching donkeys.

"What has delayed me?" She repeated the question after me absently. "Oh, a dozen things. Mary, my cook——yes, the one I've had six years—took advantage of my absence to fall in love; and she set the wedding for the third day after my return. I was servant

hunting a month—the very month when I should have finished up the things."

"Why on earth didn't you go to a hotel for a month and get them off your chest?" I asked.

"Oh, George loathes a hotel, unless he happens to be abroad. And it does seem rather hard on a man to make him live at one when his own house is perfectly livable," she added loyally. "Only you know how it takes it out of one to be servant hunting."

"But you've been back three months," I pursued remorselessly.

"George's father and mother came on from Peoria for a month's visit, and I really had to be nice to them. They're pretty old, and one doesn't know how many visits they'll pay to New York. And, anyway, I like them."

"Humph! Central Park and the Eden Musée, the Aquarium, the New Theater, the Williamsburg Bridge, the Bronx Zoo, tea at the Waldorf and Sherry's, Doctor Parkhurst's church, and so on and so on. Am I right?"

"You have evidently had old-fashioned friends visit you," replied Belinda, admitting my roll call of diversions to be approximately correct.

"And last month?" I insisted.

"Last month George had some business complications lying heavily upon him; and when he has business complications, I never have the heart to obtrude my work, or to neglect him for it. It's funny how dependent men are,

isn't it? When things aren't going well with him, he leans on me. Oh, I don't mean about the actual business in hand; but he wants me to be at home the instant he arrives. That means that I must take my exercise before four. And he wants a great deal of diversion in my society. Once I went with him to musical comedy six nights running—my mind has never been the same since. Always he has to have a lot of people in to dinner, and a lot of good bridge, and a lot of theater and concert going to keep him in good shape when things are not running smoothly at the office. And that accounts for last month. Of course, you won't deny," she added, "that one's duty to one's worried husband is higher than one's duty to a publisher?"

"Why don't you give up being an artist, then?" I asked; and, to my alarm, Belinda burst into tears.

It seems that George had recently expressed the same opinion when Belinda had urged her Dickens' pictures as a reason for declining a motor trip through the Berkshires with the family of an English linen maker.

"He—he said," sobbed poor Belinda, "tha—that his income was—was ample for our expenses. So—so—it is. But, oh, I do love my work, I do love my work, and I should be lost without it. I don't set up to be a Raphael or a Rembrandt, or any of those," she went on defiantly; "but I do say that I can get some nice little things out of what we all see on the sidewalks—everywhere. I love my little jokes. And,



"An' sure that's what any man gets to be when his wife takes to earnin' money."

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even though George's income is sufficient for our expenses, why, I like the money I can make. I'm sending Jenny's oldest girl through Bryn Mawr, and that's costing something, I can tell you. And, of course, if I didn't earn money myself, I couldn't be doing it. If it comes to educating outsiders, George has a tribe of nephews and nieces of his own. I wouldn't give up my drawing for anything—not for anything! All my trouble comes from not being a good manager. And I'm going to be one from this time forward forevermore. You watch and see. Come on into my room while I tidy myself. George has a fit if I'm the disheveled artist when he comes home."

I felt a good deal of resentment toward George as I walked home that evening. However, I argued, it was largely Belinda's fault. It was perfectly true that she was not a good manager. Artists never were good managers. She would have been just as far behind her contract with the Bardens if she had been a spinster. So I told myself.

At home, in the kitchen, I found Maggie, the mainstay of my ménage, bending over Marie at the table. Marie is the French laundress who comes "by the day," and who succeeds in bringing in, even from the smoke-laden atmosphere of New York's back yards, crisp and snowy clothes. Marie was evidently faint—strong, square-built peasant though she was. It developed that she had had no sleep the night before.

"*Mon mari*," she explained, "'e have dot astma vair bad; me no sleep at all."

I scolded Marie with the zeal and earnestness of one who sees threatening the final collapse of a perfect laundress.

"You shouldn't have come to me to-day."

"Ah, den, madame, I no come to madame all de res' dis week. All de oder days, oder ladies, dey tek dem."

I retreated hastily from my position, and dwelt on the need of nourishing food instead of the need of rest.

"Maggie, give Marie a bowl of soup now—"

But, no, Marie, "t'ankin' " me in the

choicest of broken English, declined the soup. She had to hasten home.

"*Mon mari*—'ow you call eet? My ole man—'e wait for me. 'E wait for me to fix eem de *souper*." Marie's broad, pale face beamed with honest pride. "'E no like oder cookin' 'cept only *mine*."

More fortified against fatigue and weakness by that glorious recollection than any soup of mine would have made her, Marie donned her street clothes, and set forth on her journey home, while Maggie and I, spinsters of the acidulated type at that moment, spoke to each other our full minds about Marie's husband.

"It's the lazy loafer he is, ma'am, that I'll take me sworn oath on," declared Maggie to me. "An' sure that's what any man gets to be when his wife takes to earnin' money. No, ma'am, if I was ever to marry—which the saints keep me in my senses and preserve me from!—he could do the money earnin', or we'd starve! Asthma, indeed! Laziness, sloth, one of the seven deadly sins—that's what ails Marie's old man."

Maggie's notion of the essential worthlessness of the husband of the money-earning woman I combated with several examples drawn from my own circle and her own knowledge.

"You know the Dewitts who were here at dinner last Sunday? Well, she's an actress, and a very well-paid one; and Mr. Dewitt is one of the leading educators of the country. And little Mrs. Emerson earns as much by her stories as her husband earns manufacturing electrical appliances—and it's a lot. And he hasn't shown the least inclination to stop work since his wife has begun to draw royalties."

"Well, maybe it's different among the quality," observed my handmaiden skeptically. "But one thing I'll bet ye, ma'am, an' that is that every husband of them all expects his wife to be all the things at home that she'd have to be if she weren't doin' something else. I mean, they find their collar buttons, and sort the laundry, and do all the regular housekeeping things, as well as whatever work they've got."



When he has any extra work to do in the evening, Elizabeth dutifully helps him.

I could not deny it. Mrs. Emerson answers the family invitations, makes the family calls, orders the family meals, sees that her husband's clothes go in their due rotation to the tailor's, pays the duty visit to the wife of the man who may prove a large buyer of electrical wares, arranges the dinner parties, sees to the table decorations, buys the Christmas presents, writes the Christmas notes, keeps the visiting list, has the vacuum cleaner in at stated intervals, packs the trunks, harangues the butcher on the toughness of the roast on Wednesday night, attends to the payment of the accounts each month, visits the children's schools now and then, to impress their teachers with the fact of her interest, oversees the children's associations, carries them at set periods to the dentist, the oculist, the physical culturist—is, in short, a model wife, mother, friend, hostess; a buffer between her husband and the petty annoyances of family and social life.

It is understood in the Emerson household, as in any well-regulated household, that "father" must not be bothered with a multiplicity of petty

details; "father's" intellect must be left free to devote itself to the problems of his profession, his business. In what spare chinks and crannies of time Mrs. Emerson succeeds in turning out her novel and her twenty-four short stories a year is one of the most perplexing of her friends' problems.

Everywhere it is the same. Dorinda runs a tea room with distinguished success. Dorinda's husband is a naturalist, an explorer, and something of a potentate in the world of natural science. He consented to the tea room because Dorinda was a person of energy, and he had worldly wit enough to perceive that it was better for Dorinda to be employing that energy in tea rooms than in flirtations, on his numerous expeditions into the tropics and the arctics. The tea room has been so successful that it could equip a polar expedition, and put the tea-room proprietor's husband in charge of it.

But if you imagine that on this account Dorinda asks for or obtains any concessions from the usual routine of docile wives when the explorer is at home, you do not understand the wage-

earning wife or her husband. She manages her business with her right hand then, and does not let her left hand know anything about it. She goes to lectures of the geographical societies, and gives receptions and dinners to his confrères. She has even been known to sort his notes and correspondence for him, while at the same time she employed a professional accountant to go over the tea room's bills and receipts.

Elizabeth makes scientific drawings of queer fossils and queer animals for a natural-history museum, earning a neat little bit of pin money thereby. Elizabeth's excellent husband is curator in the same museum. She is as conscientious about having his breakfast on time, his laundry delivered, his clothes pressed, his house neat and inviting, his dinner appetizing and bright, as if these were the sum of her daily tasks. When he has any extra work to do in the evening, Elizabeth dutifully helps him. When Elizabeth has any extra work to do in the evening, she defers it until after he has gone to bed.

"I think it is abominable of a woman to spoil her husband's evening after he has had a grinding day," she says.

And she utters other truths, agreeable to the masculine ear, about how a man's home should be his refuge from the storms of the outside world, about how it is a woman's duty to keep it always tranquil and refreshing, so that her husband may gain strength to go on with the Battle of Life the next day.

It is excellent doctrine indubitably. It is the age-long lesson of the race, ground into women since the cave man, returning from the hunt with a mastodon swung across his shoulder for supper, expected to find the fire ready to broil slices of his quarry, and his own corner of the cave ready for him to fall into for a rest after his exertions.

It is going to take a great many generations of the wage-earning wife to eradicate that lesson, and to make the wage-earning wife insist that if she takes part in the chase, she should enjoy some of the perquisites of the hunter, some freedom from the annoying details of existence.

She must go on, for the present, winding up the affairs of her settlement with one hand, packing the trunks for the summer with the other, advising the tenement mothers about the hot-weather care of babies with one sentence, and summoning the expressman with the next note, in order that "he" may keep his mind free and clear for his last appearance in court.

It is not because "he" wills it so. It is not even because custom wills it so. It is because the wage-earning wife's enemy—the insidious foe who bids her scant and skimp her own work, her interest in her work and her energy for it, that "he" may have the more energy to give to his—is the very heart in her bosom, her very instinct for homemaking, for helpfulness, for devotion. All the qualities which go to make her a good wife are at war with the tastes and talents that make her a good wage earner.

And Belinda's pictures are hurried; and Marie's strength fails at the tubs; and the sales from Mrs. Emerson's last novel have fallen below those from the ones before; and Daisy Dewitt can't play in "The Doll's House" next winter—her ambition these ten years past—because she would be obliged to sign a contract taking her out of town twenty weeks; and there was a strike among Dorinda's tea-room waitresses last week while she was absorbed in entertaining south pole explorers.

There are two or three wage-earning wives of the other sort, to be sure. And of them—well, one can only say that they are the sort of wives whose pictures one would wish to see spoiled, whose books one would hope to find unread, whose waitresses' strike one would actually help by judicious contributions, and whose appearance on any stage one would love to greet with a rousing round of "boos" and hisses.

And there we are, just where we set out, not a bit nearer the solution of the wage-earning wife's chief problem. Unless—unless some Belinda's George should happen to read, and to perceive where he might bring a little assistance to bear in the difficult situation.

The Seventh Day

By Fannie Hurst

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBT. A. GRAEF

MINNIE worked in the Biggest Store. Six days out of her week she doled out hairpins and thread, and wore tissue-paper wristlets; six days she called "cash," and carried a lead pencil in her hair; six evenings she ate her lonely little meal in a "Tables for Ladies" lunch room; and one hour later crept wearily into her small iron bed. But, ah, on the seventh!

This history has to do with the seventh.

At four o'clock on Sunday afternoon, Minnie took her tan suit off its wire hanger, dragged her hatbox from under the bed, and unearthed a small and scarcely worn pair of tan pumps.

While she discards the sateen shirt waist for the tan outfit, we will discuss her.

Minnie lived in a hall bedroom, with a small iron bed, oak bureau, washstand, bowl and pitcher, a straight-back chair, and two feet of floor space. She cooked her breakfast, which invariably consisted of a boiled egg and two toasted soda crackers, over the gas jet, and there were a pewter spoon and a china egg cup on the window ledge. She shared the fire escape with the occupant of the adjoining room, and on the small iron landing outside the window she kept a jar of jam and a stewpan. There were three pink paper roses in a glass vase on Minnie's bureau, and a paper-back copy of "Lady Aubrey's Secret" inserted beneath the mirror to give it the desired tilt. It was to this that Minnie returned six out of her seven evenings.

But there is a saving circumstance. On the seventh day Minnie emerged

from her chrysalis and black sateen shirt waist like a Moth Emporatus, and the six days of Biggest Store were left to the empty cocoon of the week. From four until eight o'clock each Sunday, Minnie Stradolis ceased to be; simultaneously she discarded the sateen shirt waist for the tan suit and the weary yesterdays for the glowing hour which was the beacon of all the weary ones that preceded it.

At each week end there was one dollar and thirty cents in Minnie's tan purse; that meant a club steak, shoe-string potatoes, and tip in a gold hotel dining room, with shaded candles and hidden music. To be sure, the one dollar and thirty cents represented slightly over one-fifth of her week's earnings, seven hungry noon hours and tortuous walks from the Biggest Store to the hall room, but those homely secrets were her own.

When she strolled into the marble lobby of the highest-storied and highest-priced hotel on Broadway, she was flushed with a beauty that is commonly born of morning sleep and massage; when she established herself, as was her wont, in a quiet corner of one of the numerous and perfumed parlors, she was a daughter of Fortune, fresh from her bath of milk and rose leaves. Who could know that she was awaiting the grand climax of her week, and that when the crowds came fastest and the lights were brightest, she would venture into the gold dining room for one hour—one dollar, and thirty cents' worth of dreamland that had cost her six days of aching feet behind the notion counter? It is true that at ten o'clock Cinderella was once more in the

small iron bed, but the beacon light of an unborn seventh day was shining truly across the week's chasm.

To-day Minnie put the finishing touches to her toilet with lingering care; she drew the neat-fitting coat snug around her figure, and regarded herself over one shoulder. After the manner of women, she fluffed her hair out from beneath her hat with needless repetition, and posed at herself in the mirror, a half smile hovering on her lips and in her eyes.

She pictured herself walking smartly through the lobby, she saw loitering heads turn as she passed, she even rehearsed the racy moment when the steel of her knife sank deep into the red of the steak, the quiet dignity of her "Keep the change," and the obsequious bows of the waiter. She hummed a bit as she folded the black sateen shirt waist away, and shoved the empty hat-box under the bed; then she took a final survey in the mirror. The new boarder in the adjoining room lurched noisily about, and with the weariness born of experience she closed the window which opened out on the joint fire-escape landing, and turned the key in the bureau drawer which contained her Bible and mother-of-pearl cardcase; incidentally she turned her back on Minnie.

There is a parlor in the highest-priced and highest-storied hotel on Broadway, which is done in pale gold and pink; it is like a small, rare jewel box softly tufted in satin and lighted with opal globes; through its gracefully hung doors you can see into the glistening lobby beyond, but the only sounds that penetrate are strains of far-away music and the soft swish of women's gowns.

Within this golden retreat, Minnie dropped into the soft embrace of a brocade divan, and gave herself up to its luxury; closing her eyes ever so slightly, she could imagine herself journeying through Lady Aubrey's gardens, in a gold and crystal sedan chair, with a graceful ennui in her pose and calla lilies in her hair. There were always calla lilies in Lady Aubrey's hair, and graceful ennui in her

pose. The hush of velvet rugs and faint music lulled Minnie's dreaming senses, her tense hold on the tan purse—one dollar and thirty cents—relaxed, and she nestled deeper in the pink brocade.

A man in a frock coat and shiny patent shoes dropped wearily on the farthest end of the divan. His hair was gray at the temples, and his eyes were surfeited with too much living; he was the typical clubman and dilettante of the seventh-day world.

Minnie regarded him with the little intake of breath which proximity to those of his sphere invariably caused her. From the supercorrect cut of coat to the shining finger nails, he bespoke Inverness coats and cabs. Minnie did not exactly know what constituted an Inverness coat, but no drawing-room novel was complete without one. She could also picture this tired-eyed man in the dark mahogany quiet of his den, or strolling the white and brass deck of a yacht. Her half-closed eyes to all intent and purpose were regarding an oil painting which hung beyond his head, but none of his details was lost upon her; she knew that his cane had a gun-metal knob and that his shirt studs were gold.

She had rehearsed her hour for so long that she was not even surprised when he leaned toward her and spoke.

"That is a very warm and rich bit of work. You admire his school?" He referred to the oil painting, and his tones were deep and serious.

"It's just beautiful," replied Minnie, who had not even observed the portrait, and who was vague as to his meaning.

Her temples were throbbing violently, she felt that she was contaminating this seventh-day creature in even replying, and that he would resent her if he knew, just as she resented Mr. Snuggs in the white goods.

"I see you riding in the park quite often. Only a few mornings ago, I was bold enough to canter after you, admiring your mount."

"Thank you," she replied, taking the plunge, and tilting her small head a

bit. "The women in my family have always ridden well."

"If you bespeak the race, I doubt it not."

He spoke the words with a patrician grace that thrilled her; she groped for a suitable reply, but none came. There was a pause; she observed that he wore a crested ring on his right hand. She felt it incumbent upon her to justify her unattended presence, and glanced with well-restrained impatience into the lobby beyond.

He was on his feet immediately.

"You are waiting for some one. Can I be of any assistance?"

"Thank you, no. My maid will be here presently; she is unnecessarily long."

She sank back, and let her eyes rest on a misty landscape framed in silver.

He followed her gaze.

"I have the twin Corot to that rare bit in my private collection. I am very fond of it."

"Oh!" she murmured. "How lovely!"

"There is something compelling in the strength of that stretch of mere meadowland."

"Yes," she agreed cautiously. "I love the country."

He adjusted a pair of pince-nez, and regarded her as if seeing her for the first time.

"You are an exotic, and yet you crave the natural?"

She closed her eyes, and the delicate line of her profile met the pink brocade.

"Yes," she recited, "this artificial life, the routine of ball and function, the formality of livery and society, make me long to fly back to Nature."

The man moved toward her with a new interest.

"Strange," he half mused, "that when I left my club an hour ago that same call within me prompted me to tell my man, on the spur of the moment, that we are off for the West to-morrow. I,



Six days she called "cash," and carried a lead pencil in her hair.

too, am weary of the honk of the automobile, the chug of a yacht, the titter of society. I want the wideness and the mountain tops."

She sighed appreciatively.

"I sometimes even long to change places with my maid."

"I cannot tell you how all this interests me." His face betrayed his eagerness. "Often have I sat behind my chauffeur and envied him. We suffer from ennui, but we do not heed the call; we crave house boats, but cling to the yacht and ocean liner."

"True, too true!" assented Minnie.

The man regarded her intently.

"If you will pardon the personality, I cannot escape the feeling that we have met before. Could it have been on the Continent?"

"Doubtless," she replied. "One meets so many."

He glanced at his watch.

"Since your maid is delayed, may I crave the honor of dining with you?"



"At least wear your knight's colors."

"Thank you, but I am dining in my own apartments. I cannot account for this delay. Annette is usually most punctual."

He did not press further, but bowed and handed her his card.

"At least these few moments have been a pleasure, dear lady."

"H. Dudley Livingston." The name meant nothing to her, but she read it with an intelligent raising of the eyebrows, and glanced again toward the lobby.

"Knowing you at least by hearsay, and since you ask it, I *will* dine with you, if you will return me here immediately. Annette is stupid."

He smiled with pleasure, and rose.

"I will station a page here to await your maid."

She placed a quick, detaining hand on his sleeve.

"No, no; she will wait."

"As you will, dear lady," he acquiesced, guiding her through the parlors with a quiet ease and dignity.

As they passed through the crowded lobby, she ventured an explanatory remark.

"I almost feel that I am disregarding no convention in dining with you, Mr. Livingston. The wonder of it is that we have not met."

"Life is full of ironies," sighed Mr. Livingston.

They dined beside a splashing fountain with a bank of fern and carnation between them.

"You have redeemed a hopeless, dreary day for a dreary old bachelor." She smiled at him through the fretwork of fern.

"And you have tempted my adventurous nature to a shocking indiscretion."

"I wish that I might tempt you to reveal your name."

She shook her head prettily.

"That would take all the adventure out of the situation."

"I am bound to discover it sooner or later, and besides," he added seriously,

"I want this to be more than an adventure; I want it to be a beginning."

"Oh," she said archly, "not the beginning of the end?"

"You know better than that," he admonished.

They laughed, and he leaned across the table, holding a crystal goblet aloft.

"To the beginning!"

"To drink in water is an evil sign," she observed, but raised the glass to her lips, and the ice tinkled against its frail sides.

"We will probably meet some day," she said.

"How?"

"Oh, it may be on the high seas, at the opera, or in the drawing-room."

"But now that I have found you, why begin the search anew?" he urged.

"The prince must rescue the maiden from the tower."

"Ah, I see!" he exclaimed, in mock enlightenment. "You want to meet me on a prancing steed instead of in the satin parlor of a Broadway hotel."

"Yes, and you must have jangling spurs and a shiny helmet."

He took a long-stemmed carnation from the bank between them.

"At least wear your knight's colors."

She in turn snapped the stem of a flagrant red carnation near its head, and presented it to him with silent grandiloquence.

"And you the lady's," she whispered.

They looked into each other's eyes.

"I am beginning to fear that I am encroaching upon your evening," she said, after they had finished with the salad course.

"If releasing me from a stupid soir e, and an hour of cards at the club can possibly mean encroachment, you are offering a delightful substitute; this is a happy respite."

"Yes, but I cannot permit you to sacrifice your social obligations in my behalf. I, too, am obliged to obey the dictates of my engagement calendar."

"Let us ignore those dictates together."

She finished her demi-tasse.

"You tempt me," she said, "but I have already been sufficiently indiscreet."

"I dared not hope that you would heed me," he said.

She watched him blow thoughtful wreaths of cigarette smoke, and leaned back in her chair contentedly.

"Is it possible," he asked her slowly, "that I could have met you at one of Lady Stanhope's house parties last autumn? I think I am beginning to place you."

"No. I was in Italy last autumn, but I have heard Lady Aubrey mention Lady Stanhope's house parties."



A man with hair gray at the temples placed a short-stemmed carnation on his window sill.

She stirred uneasily, and looked toward her wraps.

"It grows late," she remarked.

They passed out through the crowded dining room and the brilliant lobby. At the entrance to the little parlor, she gave him her hand.

"Good-by, and thank you for a pleasant hour."

His eyes read into hers with well-bred insistence.

"Isn't it to be au revoir?"

"I'm afraid not," she answered, with a low note in her voice. "At least, not until the knight finds the tower."

"At any rate, you have made me very happy, even if I found you only to lose you."

He pressed her hand, and she slipped in between the heavy curtains.

It was nine o'clock when Minnie

Stradolis climbed up to her hall bedroom; there were two pink spots on her cheeks, and her throat was throbbing delicately like a dove's. With nervous care, she replaced the hat in its box and the tan suit on its wire hanger, then she filled the egg cup with water for the long-stemmed carnation, and placed the cup on the iron landing outside her window. She propped the stem against the stewpan, and mothered and caressed the fragrant head.

The sash of the adjoining room opened, and a new patch of light fell across the fire escape. A man with hair gray at the temples placed a short-stemmed carnation on his window sill. In the square of light she saw that on his right hand he wore a cheap ring with a crest engraved upon it, and her discerning eye also noted that his shirt studs appeared to be gold.



The Legend of the Holy Thorn

CAME Saint Joseph and his Twelve
To the shores of Britain.
Christmas Day it was, and chill
On the crest of Weary-All Hill.
So the legend's written.

Welcome none the rude folk gave—
Oh, the day so dreary!
Blind their eyes, which could not see
That a holy man was he,
Homeless, faint, and weary!

So the good saint thrust his staff
Deep into the sod;
Crossed it thrice in blessing there,
Bade it bud and blossom fair
To the praise of God.

Thus, a miracle he wrought
Centuries ago;
And since then on Christmas Morn,
Every year the Holy Thorn
Blossoms in the snow.

MAZIE V. CARUTHERS.



The Cheap Theater

By
Mary Shaw

THEATERGOING in America has always been, and still is, a luxury. The number of theatergoers has doubled, probably even trebled, in the last twenty years. This is due to the advent of the cheap theater—especially the moving-picture show. Still, it is astonishing to know how few people compared to the whole population frequent the playhouse.

Take New York City as typical of the whole country. There are two hundred and seventy-five theaters in the Borough of Manhattan. Of these, only thirty are high-priced theaters, while two hundred and forty-five are cheap theaters. The latter include two hundred and one motion-picture houses, twenty-seven vaudeville, and seventeen of the burlesque and miscellaneous types.

During the winter season practically five hundred and fifty thousand dollars is spent at theaters each week in the Borough of Manhattan. Of this vast amount, three hundred and seventy-eight thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven dollars goes to the cheap theater, and one hundred and ninety thousand dollars to the high-priced theaters. The average price of admission to the moving-picture show is seven cents, to the popular-priced house forty-five cents, and to the high-priced theater a dollar twenty cents. Therefore it is

clear that an overwhelming number of people are patrons of the cheap theater, and that a comparatively small number frequent the high-priced playhouse.

The most significant fact about it all is that twenty-five per cent of the patrons of the cheap theater are children. The Committee of Child Hygiene of the Russell Sage Foundation has investigated the child as a theatergoer, and reports: "Out of eleven hundred and forty children of the public schools, questioned on the subject, seven hundred and thirteen go once a week to cheap theaters, and one hundred and eighty-three go every day. Over five hundred thousand children under sixteen years of age visit the cheap theaters weekly." The committee finds: "The moving-picture shows are by far the most dominant type of dramatic representation. A long and persistent observation of these shows proves that they are a very wholesome form of amusement. They are crude, mawkishly sentimental, but very rarely objectionable." Obviously, then, the high-priced theater has comparatively no influence on the great mass of the theatergoing public.

Persons who do not know much about the stage habitually decry the cheap theaters, claiming that these places are making for a bad influence. Apparently their purpose is to get the vast

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bulk of the people into first-class houses, in order to educate their taste up to a better class of drama. Peculiarly, they always talk as if it could be done overnight. This is all wrong. The theater is as old as civilization. It has been a gradual evolution, truthfully reflecting the tastes and morals of the day. Those with an intimate knowledge of the subject know how slow this process has been.

The attempt to elevate the theater is always made from the top—to drag it up by its scallock, or at least by the scruff of the neck. It is usually a painful process to all concerned. If the stage rises at all, it only stays lifted so long as the improvers are holding on for dear life. When they let go, it resumes its normal level, with a sense of having been outraged in some way. Now, the real way to uplift the stage is from the bottom—by way of the cheap theater.

The main object to keep in view in running a theater is the giving of as entertaining plays as one can, yet keeping the price of admission as low as possible. This not only increases the number of theatergoers, but creates the theatergoing habit as well. The cheap theater unquestionably accomplishes this far more successfully than the first-class theater. It is not necessary that a playhouse should be luxurious in its appointments. "The play's the thing"—or should be.

The manager of the cheap theater has a much easier task than his brother of the high-priced one. "To amuse respectable people! What a strange task!" wrote the great Molière, and he might truthfully have added: "Well-to-do people." Oh, those respectable, well-off persons of a hundred distractions besides the theater—books to read, pictures at home and abroad to look at, music to listen to, friends to visit and entertain. If all these pleasures made them more critical of the dramatic fare offered them in the first-class theater, if the dramatic taste of these fortunate ones was even on a par with their material advantages, one would not wonder that so much money is expended to lure them to the show.

But large experience proves that the quality of what the most prosperous enjoy in the theater is not much above that offered in cheap playhouses. The difference is more in the luxury of appointment before and behind the curtain; in costly salaries paid to "personalities"; in newspaper-made reputations; in odd, freakish actors and plays to stimulate the jaded taste.

What these people crowd to see one season, they keep away from the next, and the gamble of the card table or stock market is a mathematical certainty compared with the vagaries of the first-class theatrical game. No one but a born gambler should ever try to play it unless he is a genius of the Barnum variety. Up to the present time nearly every one of the great American managers has died poor. It looks as if some of the present managers would die rich, but they are not dead yet—in fact, are very much alive. Perhaps they have discovered the secret of the game.

The manager of the cheap theater has none of these problems to work out. His audiences come from humble homes. They are not sophisticated or critical. They neither desire nor appreciate the form of drama that the "highbrow" would thrust upon them. Their ways of getting pleasure are few, and to them the theater is a wonder house. They leave logic and common sense outside, and enter this temple as they do a church, ready and willing to accept its blessings and ask no questions.

If the canny manager announces that the play is the greatest drama of modern times—that goes. The young lady, in cheap messaline, with a suspicious lack of grammar, poor diction, and upper-servant manners, has only to state that she is "the daughter of an hundred earls," and she is instantly elevated to that lofty rank in their fresh imaginations. Their knowledge of earls' daughters is limited, and the hypnotism of theater suggestion is very powerful. The emotions, too, so relentlessly suppressed in the drudgery and routine of everyday life, spring quickly out of bondage in the cheap theater. No para-

dox, no anticlimax, no incongruity seems to puzzle them or dull the fever of the play.

I have seen two terrible villains in a melodrama, who were plotting the death of the hero and the ruin of the heroine, stop midway, and do a Yiddish song and dance with the persecuted heroine, take three encores, and then resume their fiendish work. Inviting the heroine to lie down in the stall of a stable to rest till the hero she was to meet should arrive, they proceeded, after she had instantly fallen fast asleep, to set fire to the straw which made her bed. Now, the lycopodium torches which served for flame were distinctly visible, as well as most of the arms of the men behind the scenes who were wielding them. It was farcical to one accustomed to the fire mechanism of a fine theater. Yet the women and girls about me clutched one another, and uttered low cries of horror, and hid their eyes, and moaned at the heroine's fate. Never have I seen a like effect produced by the most perfect appliances of stagecraft.

Even in a better class of drama the same liberties can be taken without destroying the illusion. For instance, one day an actor went to see the Corse Payton stock company play "*Camille*." He had been told it was a good performance. In the last act, as most persons know, *Gaston*, the elegant boulevardier, comes in when *Camille* is dying, and tries to cheer her up. He makes her some tea, gives her the medicine, and tries to make her forget by lightly rattling off the gossip of her set. In the midst of it the hopeless pathos of her condition overwhelms him, and he makes the excuse of arranging the pillows behind her that he may wipe away the tears that flood his eyes. Then, in a breaking voice, forcing a gay song, he laughingly bids her good-by. It is very, very touching.

Corse Payton was playing this Parisian of the boulevards. He was not able to hold his audience with the delicate pathos—the real gripping power of the scene. To lose an audience was distinctly against Corse Payton's ethics.

"*Camille*," he said, "I know what will do you more good than anything else."

Advancing to the footlights, he broke into the Corse Payton songs and dances, with *Camille* patiently waiting to die until his numerous encores were over.

"Absurd! Ignorant!" you will say. But remember that the province of the stage is to create illusion, and in the minds of the cheap-theater audiences the power of these plays was not destroyed by the putting in of these irrelevant bits. The illusion of Shakespeare's plays was produced in his own time without scenery and with few properties. During the Restoration nobles sat on the sides of the stage, and conversed with the actors during the scenes. One cannot help wondering what magic quality of the fancy we have dulled by our elaborate, correct, costly stage spectacles.

Then there is the detailed newspaper description of how every effect is produced.

In a cheap theater, when the "Hark! A horseman is coming!" rings out, the far-away thud of the horse's hoofs gradually rising into a clatter, and the pull-up, with a few nervous stamps at the door, sends a thrill of expectancy through every one. In a better class of playhouse, many up-to-date oracles are busy all through the episode explaining to friends how the coconut shells that simulate the sounds of the horses' hoofs are manipulated by the property man. Is it wise, in such a case, to know too much?

During the chariot race in "*Ben Hur*"—one of the greatest achievements in modern stage mechanism—while the four chariots and sixteen horses were apparently running at breakneck speed around the stadium, the simple, untutored auditor was harassed on all sides by descriptions of how it was done from newspaper-wise neighbors. Did all this knowledge of ways and means add anything to the illusion of the play? Was it not all rather definitely opposed to the spirit of the theater?

Personally, I envy these simple, cheap theatergoers. I believe they still possess some of the precious touchstone

that we of the higher cult have had elaborated out of our make-up. I hear them say in the theater that people cannot now be drawn to a Shakespearean play with simple scenery and costumes, as they once were. There must be expensive toggery, elaborate settings, long processions, and ballets to copy as nearly as possible the eye allurements of comic opera.

The lack of realization of the scope and power of the cheap theater is very general. One has to have been brought up in it, or deliberately to have sought it out and studied its possibilities. My attention was first directed to it by the testimony of settlement workers as to its valuable aid. It was the Hull House people in Chicago who amazed me with stories of the love of the theater among the poorest classes, and the sacrifices they made to go to the play. The young people would work hard all day, go without lunches or suppers, and spend the money thus saved at the theater. The "By-jow," as they call the Bijou Vaudeville Theater near Hull House, is the *Comédie Française* of Halstead Street. No plan that has ever been devised by the combined brains of the Hull House organization can compete with the "By-jow" in keeping boys and girls off the streets at night.

Like very wise people, they surrendered to the inevitable, and made a friend of the pleasant Irishman who ran the theater. Much flattered, and greatly amazed, no doubt, at his unconscious importance, he gladly eliminated all vulgarity from his program. Even a full house could not win from Mr. Hennessey the expansive smile he bestowed on Jane Addams when she praised the performance. Her approbation was his sole artistic standard. So together he, the cheap-theater manager, and she, the saint of Hull House, did more for the uplifting of the theater than any of the abortive art theaters that have perished in the confusion of their own aims.

How different was the attitude of some clergymen I once heard attacking cheap theaters at a conference. No specific charge was brought against them. It seemed to be assumed that because

the price of admission was low, the people patronizing them poor, and the quality of the entertainment such as did not appeal to the reverend gentlemen, that they were therefore necessarily vile. Most of the speakers wanted the cheap theaters put out of business. One, longer-winded than the others, allowed that a cheap theater might be permitted if a committee of clergymen superintended the output. Without sympathy, or appreciation, or knowledge of the theater, they yet felt themselves fully equipped to pass judgment on it.

No one asked these Christian gentlemen what they had to offer in exchange to the hundreds of thousands of poor people whose lives were brightened by the cheap show. Perhaps they thought that a full-length poster of a minister, with a quotation in big print: "I advise every man, woman, and child to see this play," would be as great an indorsement as it is when placarded on the front of uptown playhouses. If so, they were mistaken. The poor love the theater; they do not sneak into it half-heartedly, or need any patronizing indorsement to excuse their presence there. Neither are they troubled by an itch to improve everybody's tastes but their own. It is enough for each one of them that he enjoys himself. They do not need a dramatic critic to tell them whether they should have liked it or not, or clubs to turn the play inside out and make hash of it. Each is a law unto himself, and is happily left to work out his own theatrical salvation.

The manager of the cheap theater becomes an expert in increasing the number of new theatergoers. I can best illustrate this by the way one manager, who is very well known, has silently and singly become a power for good in the community outside of what he is laboring to do. I visited this theater in Williamsburg, where a stock company performed twice a day, changing the bill weekly, and where the highest price, as he used to announce between the acts, was "thirty-five cents for seeing thirty-five actors—one cent an actor."

The *matinée* audiences were composed entirely of women. As I stood

looking over the crowd from the back, I expressed surprise at his being able to get that number of women, who were evidently of the poorer classes. I asked him what they did with their small children and babies while they were there.

He took me along the corridor into his nursery. There, in a spacious room, with the afternoon sun pouring in, were some fifty children, ranging in size from small babies who were lying in cribs and pulling away at bottles, to children of four and five, toddling about the room. There were a number of neatly dressed young women entertaining and taking care of them.

Payton explained that in the beginning he had to face the problem of the children. He realized that very few of these women would be able to find some one to take care of them while they were at the theater. In case of sickness or emergency, yes, but not for the sake of amusement. So he determined to take care of the children himself, and said, with a wise, knowing wink at me: "I am not only increasing the number of theatergoers that are grown up and ready to go now, but I am preparing theatergoers for the future. All these children, coming, as they do, from poor homes where the surroundings are not comfortable, and where there is no one to amuse them, will have growing up in them the strong impression that the theater is a nice, comfortable place, where they are happy. They will naturally gravitate to it as they grow older, and will form the nucleus of the new generation of audiences.

"Think, too, of the poor, tired mother, who wants a couple of hours' relaxation in the midst of her never-ending work. She gets it here. The whole thing operates both ways. The child cries for our nursery. To quiet him the mother brings him, and must purchase admission for herself. And what does she get? Respite from the importunings of the child, and a good show in the bargain. The child is happy, the mother is happy, and I am happy. Can you beat it?"

What further can be done to improve the cheap theater is foreshadowed by

the work of one woman in a moving-picture and vaudeville house in Boston. This woman was made manager of the place, and given full power to try out her own ideas.

In the first place, she decided that the money usually spent on the outside of these buildings in garish lights and ornamentation could be more advantageously used in the appointments and decoration of the interior of the house. She reasoned that the same people patronized the theaters constantly, attracted by the quality of the entertainment and surroundings. When satisfied, they are the most effective advertisers an amusement place can have.

Following this plan, she proceeded to make her theater more comfortable and artistic than the regular, barren, rather dingy moving-picture house. Instead of selling tickets at an outside booth, and rushing the buyer immediately into the auditorium, our manager had a small, tastefully decorated lobby and ticket office inside.

She had noticed that patrons of picture houses often had to wait for accompanying friends on the street in all kinds of weather. So she took a small room leading into the lobby, and fitted it up tastefully for the comfort of the women. In addition to the customary furnishings there were a writing desk, with paper and envelopes, pen and ink, a slot stamp machine, and telephone.

For ushers there were a couple of neatly uniformed girls, who politely urged the people to the front seats. Instead of being met with the customary "Go down forward, please," the patrons were shown to the vacant seats by these girls, who carried little electric flash lights to point the way. All was neatness, good taste, and good manners in the front of the house.

Our manager studied the "likes" of her audiences as to picture subjects and acts, but she always had one number of her program for the small minority who could appreciate something better. It was surprising in a ten-cent theater to hear a good piece of music sung by a competent singer, a well-executed violin solo, or a playlet fairly acted.

By good judgment and a belief in the possibilities of the cheap theater, she raised up a new one in a city already overcrowded with them to the front rank of successful houses, and in a year's time was able to increase the price to fifteen cents, and later even to twenty-five cents, with constantly increasing patronage.

A New York newspaper a few days ago stated that a religious organization of some kind intended starting a moving-picture theater where instructive films only would be shown. The inference seemed to be that these people wish to improve the class of fare offered at these places. They will charge five cents to help pay expenses. If they put an experienced cheap-theater manager at the head of it, and take his advice, they have a fair chance of competing. If they are going to rely on their inexperience, they will fail.

It is time for the world at large to learn that the furnishing of amusement is a distinct business, with rules, laws, and responsibilities governing it, and that the meddling of incompetent, well-meaning people is as pernicious here as in any other economic department.

It is an interesting point that the plays at low-priced theaters nearly all deal in very moral motives. It is well known that the unconvicted murderer in the audience will be the noisiest and most delighted person when the actor-murderer is caught and brought to punishment. The safe-breaker and the burglar are the most enthusiastic in their applause when virtue is triumphant and vice is punished.

Part of the bewilderment of the lower grade of persons in high-priced theaters devoted to subtle, modern plays, springs from their inability to grasp the idea when the average man is shown to be a compound of good and bad. With them a man must be wholly bad or wholly good—and he must be treated accordingly.

An actor knowing this psychological fact availed of it thus: He had tried to have some lines given to him, but could get nothing but a few words as a servant. He was bound to get a round of

applause, willy-nilly. To this end he went on one night in his part as flunky, and exclaimed: "The carriage is waiting, my lord—and the man who lays hand on a woman except in kindness is a coward and a villain." He got his round of applause.

To those who enjoy the theater, yet are unable to afford a very fine show, the cheap theater is a godsend. The lower the price of admission, the more of a blessing it is. Once where persons could only go to one show for twenty-five cents, they can now go to five for the same money. As Hood sang to a careless public the "Song of the Shirt," and made poetical forever the pathos and drudgery of the sewing girl's life, so some day a singer of words will raise a tribute to the cheap theater.

I have the inherent respect for statistics that always goes with the unpractical character. Great theatrical managers and playwrights will have none of them. New theaters are being built at the rate of a dozen a year, but if you mention that Carroll Wright, the great statistician, computed a dozen years ago—dividing the money paid into the theaters by the population of the country—that each man, woman, and child could only go to the theater once a year for twenty-five cents, the manager would wave you aside with a gesture of scorn. He ignores the patent truth that we have more than enough of high-priced theaters for the comparatively few who can afford them. His empty galleries and thinning balconies he rightly blames on the cheap theaters. But he does not admit that the cheap theater gives better entertainment for much less money—seats the people on the floor or first balcony, where they can see, and hear, and get within the radius of the magnetism of the show.

If I had a million dollars to spend in uplifting the theater, I would use most of it in the cheap playhouse. Apart from bringing real happiness and increased knowledge to a far greater number of people than is possible in higher-priced theaters, the conditions are far more favorable to the success of any honest effort to improve the drama.



ILLUSTRATED BY H. VON S. LUCAS

WHEN it was whispered about that the Juddville Woman's College was to receive, by special arrangement with its directors, a male student, excitement and indignation waxed intense among the serious-minded young undergraduates of that seat of learning. The Y. W. C. A. was shocked; the Lit held an indignation meeting; the president of the senior class made a speech which broke all previous oratorical records; and private comment and conjecture thickened the air.

Miss Juliet Sparks, the poetess of her class, auburn-haired, delicate-featured, exceedingly soulful and romantic, and her bosom friend, Miss Elizabeth Travers, *moyen age* as to figure, sloppy as to dress, cheerfully cynical as to views, discussed the topic of the hour on their way home from afternoon lecture.

"What, in the name of all that's quixotic, do you suppose this solitary young male will be like?" demanded Miss Juliet, with a disdainful lift of her little, tip-tilted nose.

"A pasty-faced, tow-headed youth, with a young mustache like a baby's eyebrow; or else a smart Aleck who wears tie, socks, and handkerchief all

to match, and ornaments his conversation with jokes from the almanac," replied Miss Elizabeth, familiarly known as "Lippy Liz," on account of a certain Celtic facility.

Miss Juliet made use of the dainty little shrug she had developed since she began to learn the French language.

"He'll most likely belong to the stupid, thick-skulled sort," she sniffed, her inflection suggesting just the ghost of a shadow of regret.

"Probably he will. And our job is to pry the idea into his thick skull that he isn't wanted here. When I think of the way we women were treated by men when we first got a footing in *their* old colleges, it simply makes my Irish boil over. Our business is to snub him, and snub him good."

Miss Elizabeth voiced the indignation that demands the vulgar idiom for its full expression.

"We'll do it, Elizabeth! We'll make him feel unfortunate! My one fear is that he'll be so insignificant that he won't be worth the trouble. Because, you know, if he *isn't* pasty-faced, and tow-headed, and thick-skulled, it'll be all the more fun to squelch him."

"Lippy Liz" looked her friend over with an expression of pained reproof.

"Juliet Sparks," she admonished, wickedly mindful of the fact that Juliet hated above all things to be addressed by her full name, "Juliet Sparks, you scent conquest! Pray try to curb that inborn tendency of yours to be the most outrageous flirt who ever was a disgrace to her sex. If I ever catch you trying to annex a solitary, defenseless he co-ed, I—I'll make you eat oysters fried in fudge."

The paths to their separate boarding houses parted at this juncture. Elizabeth pursued her ambling way on foot, and Juliet tripped airily into the street car that was in the habit of jolting her to her more remote destination.

A preternaturally yellow-haired young widow, a "special student" at Juddville College, who, from all indications, had just had some difference of opinion with the conductor, was in the act of alighting from the other end of the car, which, not improbably for the lady's especial benefit, had stopped immediately in front of a large pool of mixed mud and water.

"Don't look too hard at that water, ma'am," advised the conductor, as he watched her eye the pool with wrathful disgust. "It might turn into lemonade."

The other occupants of the car, with one exception, enjoyed the joke. Juliet, good manners notwithstanding, could not help smiling a little, too, for she had long disapproved of this particular lady as rich, gaudy, and "common."

Then she fell to studying the other passengers, with her usual interest in male humanity. The one who had not smiled at the lady's discomfiture sat directly opposite her, and she soon discovered that he was by far the most "interesting." She watched him guardedly from under her long lashes.

When the jocular conductor—a strange one—came around, she held out her ticket.

Now, there were two kinds of tickets accepted on the Juddville street cars—a blue ticket, valued at five cents, for ordinary travelers, and a pink one—three cents—for "school children," the latter term being interpreted by the lib-

eral-minded Juddvillites, and by most conductors, to mean any individual who carried books to and from any institution of learning, be it college or kindergarten. The ticket that Juliet held out was a pink one.

The strange conductor, his temper still somewhat ruffled after his recent encounter, looked her over with cynical appraisal, while making no movement to take the pink ticket.

"Do ye think ye're old enough to give a ticket, miss?" he inquired at last, in tones clearly audible to the whole car, and subjected her to another half-scornful, half-indulgent scrutiny.

Juliet's delicate, sea-shell complexion went brick-red. Her sea-colored, gray-green eyes, behind their abundant fringe of dark auburn, rose, then fell, then lifted themselves again with an unconscious appeal. It was as if they knew their power, and were exercising it without their owner's prompting.

For Juliet was too paralyzed with shame and horror to wittingly put forth her usual blandishments. She realized, with a cold, sinking sensation like falling miles in a dream, that she hadn't any other ticket, and also that she hadn't a single cent. According to her invariable custom, she had exhausted her month's allowance four days before the next check was due.

"I—I haven't any other."

Her own voice sounded to Juliet's burning ears like that of an asthmatic ghost.

The conductor softened under her irresistible, long-lashed gaze; but, before he could take the pink ticket, the interesting passenger opposite had risen from his seat, taken the empty place beside Juliet, and quietly handed a blue ticket to the caustic collector of fares.

"Oh, thank you!" Juliet recovered sufficiently to make the gray-green appeal of her lifted eyes half volitional. "Thank you ever so much!" She veiled the eyes again with long, curved, auburn lashes.

"I am charmed indeed to be of service," said the stranger, with an equal accentuation of syllables that proclaimed him foreign.

His voice thrilled Juliet; it was at once low and sonorous, like the careless hum of a great basso. It matched his eyes—the darkest, deepest, most liquid eyes that Juliet had ever had the privilege of looking into. She found herself wondering if it would be too rude a shock to him to find out that her unfortunate surname was Sparks.

The next morning, as Miss Elizabeth Travers was meandering toward college with the aimless step that betokened no lecture until ten o'clock, she was mildly surprised to observe her friend, Miss Juliet Sparks, descending from the street car at her accustomed place in the company of a "new one."

The new one was tall, dark, faultlessly attired; the glass, indeed, of fashion, and in every respect the mold of form.

Elizabeth halted on the street corner, and placidly waited for the pair, noting, with a bland smile, that Juliet, on seeing her, flushed, wavered, and then, realizing the inevitable, prepared to face it hardily.

"Little minx!" she chuckled. "Trying to hog all the men! If I only cared enough about them, I believe I'd try my hand at taking them away from her, just to see what I could do in that line."

Juliet was in effervescent, but slightly strained spirits when they came up.

"Elizabeth, let me introduce to you Mr. Naservan Cariapa, none other, if you'll believe me, than the new co-ed. Mr. Cariapa, your education at Juddville is not complete until you have met my dear friend, Miss Elizabeth Travers, otherwise known as 'Lippy Liz.'"

"Most happy to meet you, Mademoiselle Liz."

Miss Elizabeth's warm, Irish-blue eyes grew a trifle steely, and her large, handsome mouth set itself in lines less tolerant than usual.

"Liz to my familiars," she said succinctly, looking the new co-ed full in his

exceedingly handsome and magnetic eye. "Miss Travers to all newly introduced young men!"

The profound humility, sweetly blended with exquisite ease and grace, with which the co-ed received this rebuff, was enough in itself to imply an intimate acquaintance with all the courts and camps of Europe. Elizabeth, if



not mollified, was at least disarmed. She said little during the remainder of the walk, the conversation being maintained chiefly by Juliet's ebullient, if somewhat forced, gayety.

"And this, Juliet Sparks," exclaimed Elizabeth, when the fascinating stranger had taken polite leave of them in the rotunda, "this, then, is what you have the nerve to call 'squelching him'!"



"Liz to my familiars; Miss Travers to all newly introduced young men!"

"But, Elizabeth, let me explain." Juliet gave a detailed account of the ticket incident. "How could I be rude to him after that? And, besides, he's not a bit like what we expected. He's a Parsee, Elizabeth; think of it! You never heard of a Parsee? What crass ignorance! I never did, either, till he told me about himself. Well, they're the aristocrats of India, and they were driven out of Persia a long time ago on account of their religion, and they're simply *great*. And he's studying conditions in American women's colleges so that he can go back and introduce them in Parsee—I mean India, of course. And, Elizabeth, he's lived in the Latin Quarter, among real bohemians, and speaks French like a na-

tive. And he knows simply everything—all about Leipsic music, and Paris theaters and cafés and things, and the occult, and palmistry, and a million other things. And isn't his name great? Naservan Cariapa!" Juliet's tongue lingered lovingly on the euphous vowels.

"He's a mad, mustachioed, purple-hued exotic; and I'll make him shrivel yet, or know the reason why."

"He's a citizen of the world, and a real gentleman; and I'm going to be decent to him even if you do get your mad up, Elizabeth Travers, so there!"

From that moment Juliet spared no pains to be "decent" to the fascinating co-ed, who gave her ample opportunity. And her friend, who possessed too keen

a sense of humor, and too much inborn laziness to "get her mad up" easily, looked on with amused tolerance and languid interest. It was a sheer impossibility, indeed, for even "Lippy Liz" to snub the courtly stranger. To all outward appearances, she gave up the attempt after the first encounter, along with the Y. W. C. A., the Lit, and the strong-minded president of the senior class. Discourtesy hung its head and retired abashed before his disarming suavity, his flattering deference, his gentlemanly decorum, the unobtrusive but miraculously perfect adequacy of his speech and bearing on each and every occasion.

But Juliet's self-imposed task of doing the honors of Juddville to the newcomer was found to interfere to a considerable extent with the tie of friendship, hitherto held sacred. Instead of walking home with Elizabeth, she now tripped by the side of the dark and polished Naservan; and whereas she had formerly chatted and lounged with her friend in the gym, or concocted fudge over the gas stove in the domestic-science room, she now made but rare and fitful appearances in these old haunts.

The estrangement was furthered by a little accidental happening. Elizabeth, while visiting in her friend's room one Saturday morning, casually allowed her eyes to fall upon a closely written sheet that protruded from a disorderly mass of "notes" and exam papers lying on the table. The writing was strange to Elizabeth, a queer, angular, foreign-looking hand. She scanned it more narrowly, and when Juliet's back happened to be turned she began reading aloud in her most matter-of-fact voice:

"Oh, fervent eyelids letting through
Those eyes, the greenest of things blue,
The bluest of things gray."

"Elizabeth Travers, take your nose out of my private papers, you outrageous old snoop!"

Juliet whisked the whole mass, notes, exam papers, correspondence, and all into a bureau drawer; but not before Elizabeth had wickedly declaimed an elaborate passage concerning the writer's intense love and admiration—min-

gled, of course, with deep respect—for "even the thorns that guard the proudly sensitive rose."

After that, Juliet not only did not seek, but even shunned her former boon companion. Elizabeth, obeying natural laws, sought companionship and diversion elsewhere, and the little rift in the lute widened hourly.

There ensued a succession of changes of attitude as abrupt as they were peculiar.

Suddenly, without warning or apparent reason, Juliet ceased to stroll, chat, linger on street corners, or in any way philander with the cosmopolitan co-ed. Simultaneously she renewed, or attempted to renew, her friendship with Elizabeth.

But, to her immense surprise and discomfiture, Elizabeth appeared by no means anxious to be reinstated in her regard. She was languidly cynical, vacuously absent-minded. Her *moyen age* figure and "dippy" skirts no longer lounged and straggled about the gym and the domestic-science room; and she was rarely to be found when her erstwhile fickle friend was disposed to enjoy her company on the way home from afternoon lecture.

Juliet was nonplused. It was not at all like Elizabeth to bear malice, or nurse the memory of wrongs.

Then suddenly, without warning or apparent reason, Elizabeth became the old Elizabeth once more. The languid cynicism changed to her usual caustic variety, the absent-minded vacuity to her own, peculiar, indolent alertness. Again she ambled home with Juliet, and used the gym for the exact reverse of what it was intended, and made the domestic-science room odoriferous with boiled-over fudge. The old footing of intimacy was once more restored.

But there was something lacking—or, perhaps, disturbingly present. Both girls felt it, and wondered at it, each in her own way. The rift within the lute had narrowed to a tiny, invisible crack, but it still played havoc with the music. The name of Naservan Cariapa was never mentioned between them. It was as if the he co-ed had died the death.



"You!" she managed to gasp at last. "You—engaged to Naserran!"

Time and fortune, however, will not stand for too much stability in human affairs, and the two combined together to bring about a day when the secrets of all hearts were revealed.

One morning, some three months after the installation of the co-ed, Juliet burst suddenly into the Seminar of the Romance Languages, where Elizabeth lounged in sole possession. Her *moyen age* figure was reclining in the most comfortable armchair that the place afforded, her ample feet were disposed on the seat of another, and she was placidly reading "Trilby," instead of the "Chanson de Roland," which lay sprawled open and neglected on the floor.

"Elizabeth!"

"Hello!"

Elizabeth changed the relative positions of her feet as an additional sign of greeting, and retired again into "Trilby."

"Elizabeth!"

Something in the tone of Juliet's voice made Elizabeth lift her preoccupied eyes, and she beheld tears in those of her friend—a not unusual sight, however, for Juliet was nothing if not emotional.

"What's the matter, Jule? Why weep? Life is a merry dance. Ain't it? No? What?"

Elizabeth withdrew again into her book, humming the air of that familiar song that begins:

"Strike up the band,
Here comes a sailor."

"Oh, Elizabeth, stop talking that nonsense! It's awful at such a time! I've got the most *terrible* news!"

"Terrible news! Why, what is it, dear? Is it in your family?"

Elizabeth became at once grave and tender.

Juliet flung herself on the floor, and plunged her tearful face into the café-au-lait box plaits of Elizabeth's lap.

"Elizabeth! Oh, Elizabeth! And I was secretly engaged to him. I've been for nearly two months!"

"Engaged to him! Engaged to whom, Juliet? What has happened to him? Has he died?"

"N-n-n-no, he hasn't. I—I wish he had. That awful widow's got him—that blondined, vulgar thing—the one who was having the fuss with the car conductor the first day I ever met him. He—he's eloped with her. They say she's simply rolling in money. It's all in the morning papers. Oh, Naservan, Naservan! And I was engaged to him all the time!"

There was a slight pause. With Juliet's heart-rending wail of "Naservan, Naservan!" Elizabeth had straightened suddenly in her chair. Almost immediately, however, she relaxed again. Then she spoke:

"So was I."

Juliet lifted her head, and stared into the inscrutable face of her friend. In her astonishment she had forgotten to close her mouth.

"You!" she managed to gasp at last. "You—engaged to Naservan!"

"Sure!" returned Elizabeth, with one of her wide, baffling smiles. "Don't you think I was good enough for him?"

"Too good, Elizabeth—too good by a million miles. But—but how did you manage to keep it from me?"

"The same way that you kept it from me, I presume," said Elizabeth, a trifle dryly. "How was that?"

"Why, you see, we were engaged secretly. And—and he said it was best for the present to tell no one, and not even be seen together in public. And I thought," with a briny gulp, "I thought I was the only one."

"So did I."

"Oh, Elizabeth, isn't it terrible?"

"Shucks, no! It probably will be for the widow. You and I got off with a reprimand—for idiocy. Summon divine philosophy to your aid, my child. Stop pickling my new dress that I squandered good money on especially for his perfidious benefit, and let me finish 'Trilby.' It's great!"



Wind at Twilight

THE sunset died just now, and all
The torch flame of the afterglow
Has not the ardor to recall
The warmth of scarce an hour ago.

Instead, a little night wind steals,
Cold, searching, through the trembling wheat—
A waif from Northern lands, where reels
The pinewood to the storm wind's beat.

Cold little wind, you shall not daunt
Our whim to trudge this twilight way.
You shall not to the fireside haunt
Drive us to drowse as idlers may.

My dear one presses close beside,
And 'twixt the wind and her I go;
And, oh, to shield her thus, through wide,
Long, cold life travels, clinging so!

JEANNIE PENDLETON EWING.



What the Editor Has to Say

SINCE we last talked together in these columns, Charles Battell Loomis passed out of the world. For the last year or so of his life he had been ill, in suffering a great part of the time, but in spite of this his work which you were accustomed to read each month had been the same—the same cheerful, kindly, helpful philosophy of the most cheerful and lovable of cheerful Americans. His last little sermon appears in the current number of SMITH'S, and for a great many years past hardly a number of the magazine has gone to press to which he was not a contributor. Thousands upon thousands of readers have learned to look forward to his monthly talks, and we may be excused therefore in speaking a word—of regret at his exit, of admiration for what we consider an admirable and successful life.

A DOZEN successful books stand on the library shelves as the work of Loomis. "Cheerful Americans" is one. "The Knack of It," consisting of a collection of some of the sermons appearing in SMITH'S, is another. None of the books is a volume that one would throw aside after reading; they are all worth keeping and remembering. It is possible for no man to see himself as he really is. The only true reflection and measure of his character is his work in the world—the things that have come to pass through his existence on earth, the new things that have been created, the people who have been made happier. The last stroke to the picture

is not drawn till the life is over. Pictured in this fashion, by his books, and stories, and magazine articles, by the feeling of those who knew and loved him, we think we see in Charles Battell Loomis a figure which any man might envy and admire. He lived for fifty years, but there have been century-long lives not half so valuable, not half so crowded with the sense and sweetness that make for the betterment of humanity. The last regular sermon of Loomis appears in the present issue, but he left behind him several little talks on various subjects which you will read in future numbers of the magazine.

THE complete novel to open the February issue of SMITH'S is called "Roxanna," and is the work of Grace Margaret Gallaher. It is some time since you have read anything of hers. This new story is typical of her, filled with the youthful charm and feeling, the dramatic quality, the reality and vividness that we have come to associate with her work. Roxanna is just such a New England girl as Miss Gallaher has drawn for us in previous stories—not a type, not a puppet to hang a plot on, but a real breathing and living individuality worth knowing and caring for.

ALSO, the next issue of the magazine contains the first installment of a great new serial by Anne O'Hagan. It is a mystery story, and, if you are at all interested in hypnotism or its ef-

fects, it will make an especial appeal to you. If you like mystery stories, you will be sure to turn to succeeding installments before you look at anything else in the magazine. If you like stories of any kind, you are sure to like "In Worlds Not Realized," from the very start. It will appear in three large installments.



WE wish to call special and emphatic attention to a story by Margaret Busbee Shipp, which appears in the next issue of SMITH'S. It is the story of some of the people engaged in a Southern textile mill. We have read stories and articles about these Southern cotton mills for years off and on. They were almost without exception written from one point of view. The cotton mill was an iniquity, it fostered child labor and a thousand other crimes against humanity. The owner, the manager, the stockholders were fattening on the lifeblood of the people. As a matter of fact, this is by no means true. As a matter of fact, also, a great deal of the stock of these Southern mills is held by good conservative church-going people in the North who are not ashamed to take their dividends or to complain if they fall below eight or ten per cent. Mrs. Shipp's story in the next issue is not written from that point of view. In some sort it holds up the other side of the shield for inspection. There are two sides to every question in the world. You will find this side at least interesting. You may rest assured that the story—it is called "The Bottom Rung"—is a faithful transcription of actual events, a portrait of real characters, a piece of life as it actually is in a Southern town. Mrs. Shipp is a

Southerner herself, and knows whereof she writes. Moreover, she has the ability to make living people live for us again on the printed page. "The Bottom Rung" is an unusually good short story, one of her best. You all remember "The Palace of Truth," "But Half a Man," and other work of hers. We want you to be sure to read this.



IN the next issue of SMITH'S there are two excellent essays on widely diverse subjects. One is "On Influencing Our Children," by Virginia Middleton. The other is "Society and the Poor Woman." Most of us are poor, and most of us have something to do with children at one time or another. But we believe that the crustiest and wealthiest old bachelor would read both of these papers with a great deal of genuine interest. There is in the same issue a humorous poem, "Temperament," by Wallace Irwin, and a helpful paper on "The Secrets of Youth," by Doctor Lillian Whitney.



THE short fiction in the next issue of SMITH'S is even a little better than usual. "Vindication" is a strong story by Marie Manning. "The Famous Cochrane Children" is another tale at once funny and pathetic, and, above all, lifelike, by Marion Short. There is another funny story by Holman F. Day, and another story of a coeducational college, "The Feminine Principle," by Edwin L. Sabin. Then there are more good stories by Fred Jackson, Alma Martin Estabrook, Dorothy Canfield, and others.



How to Ward Off That Extra Pound of Flesh

By Dr. Lillian Whitney

SUPERABUNDANCE of flesh is a physical and mental handicap; besides that, nothing destroys one's charms so effectually as fat. A slender woman can with impunity do a hundred things that make a stout one appear ridiculous, and she is subjected to no end of playful—yet to her, stinging—comment and criticism if she is anything but very sedate and phlegmatic. Corpulence is extremely inartistic, and fat is absolutely ugly. It is much easier to prevent the accumulation of flesh than to get rid of it. There are many reduction cures, and there are also many cases of serious, and some of fatal, illness as a result of pursuing a reduction cure too strenuously.

Some persons are normally of stout habit; that is, everything seems to make them fleshy. A noted society woman who could not get rid of her flesh remarked that she would fatten on sawdust. Marked obesity, especially in the very young, is a disease, and should only be combated under the guidance of a physician. Frequently, in girls and young women, it is caused by anæmia, and when this condition is corrected by means of a reliable iron preparation, the unhealthy fat disappears. The name of such a preparation will gladly be furnished on application.

It may be an inheritance; fat runs in some families, just as other traits, physical peculiarities, and the like do in others.

However, the vast majority acquire flesh, and acquire it after the body has reached its stature, when growth continues in breadth. While the body is

still growing in height, habits of eating and drinking are formed that are most difficult to overcome when the system no longer requires the same amount of nourishment. All surplus then goes to fat, and this, in turn, is conducive to lessened activity, which grows upon one until middle life is reached, when one is averse to any exercise except what is absolutely necessary. At this age most women find themselves uncomfortably stout, and their mirror tells them an unpleasant truth—that they are not as good to look upon as they once were.

Now, a rush is made into reduction cures regardless of the condition in which a woman happens to be at the time, and no end of trouble may result. For instance, several Turkish baths a week may permanently injure a heart that had previously been merely weak, but sufficiently healthy to withstand all ordinary strain. Excessive dieting will, in those whose blood-making organs are below the average, undermine the system to a dangerous extent.

Therefore, in recommending the following means for reducing weight, one fact must never be lost sight of, namely: These means are pursued in moderation, and given up at the first indication of weakness, shortness of breath, etc., etc., to be resumed when a normal condition again prevails. Just as many factors enter into a state of corpulency, so many things must be considered if we wish to affect an intelligent cure. The entire hygiene of the body must be so regulated that the health is maintained, and even improved, while a gradual reduction of weight is going on.



Diet on soured milk, green vegetables and acid fruits.

It is well, before starting, to get one's exact weight and height—because the weight must correspond to the size of the body—then train down to the weight the height of the body should carry. The tendency of average American women is to grow stout after the thirty-fifth year, and they quickly lose that attractiveness of form which characterizes the women of France, and, notably, the Austrians, who are famous for the elegance of their figures.

Diet is of foremost importance in flesh reduction. The question of diet is a very large subject, and can only be lightly touched upon in an article of this length, but one fact has now become firmly established, and that is that we all eat far too much for the needs of the body. If we ate, not in accordance with acquired and artificial tastes, but only in response to the craving of the system for nourishment, we would never overfeed, and never be forced to go on a diet for any purpose whatever.

Certain rules must be rigidly enforced in a flesh cure; never to eat between meals, and never to drink while

eating. Opinions differ as to the number of meals to be taken daily. Some authorities advise eating to get thin, that is, six light meals of selected foods in place of the usual three; others advise cutting out one of the three meals, either breakfast or luncheon, and confining oneself to two fairly hearty meals daily; then there are the followers of Fletcher, who eat only when they are actually hungering for food, and then eat anything their taste craves, only masticating it so thoroughly that the appetite is satisfied with comparatively little food.

There are certain articles of diet that make fat, and they are not absolutely essential to bodily needs. These can be cut out with safety. The taste that runs to such foods, and sniffs at plain, wholesome fare is a perverted taste, and must be reëducated. The diet list for a reduction cure can be sufficiently varied to tempt any normal appetite. Those who have had the greatest amount of experience upon this matter commend frequent eating of light meals, consisting chiefly of green vege-

tables, steamed fruits, dry toast or hard bread, lean meat once a day. The diet can be varied to suit individual needs, of course, and should be expanded and contracted in accordance with the conditions prevailing at the time.

A purely vegetable diet is not recommended. Beans, peas, potatoes, and foods of this class are decidedly fattening; on the other hand, there is danger of *underfeeding* in a diet confined to greens entirely. Some animal food must be added. Milk is an ideal food, but some constitutions take on flesh very rapidly when milk forms a part of the daily menu. This is not the case, however, with soured or buttermilk, from which the cream has been abstracted. In fact, authorities are agreed that a diet consisting of greens, with one or two quarts of buttermilk daily, will not alone reduce the weight systematically, but will maintain a high standard of health.

So much has been written during the past few years on the beneficial effect of "turned" milk, that it is needless to go into the matter here. Druggists all over the country, as well as the large dairy concerns, are now putting out these products in large amounts. They can also be made at home with the greatest ease. If sour milk is preferred, a teaspoonful of vinegar added to one quart of milk and allowed to stand in the warmth for fifteen minutes will bring about the desired result. Unsweetened junket is nothing more than milk thickly clabbered by means of rennet, an acid ferment, and is another way of making most delicious sour milk.

Buttermilk can now be made by any city housekeeper; it requires only the use of tablets sold at all drug stores for this purpose. If the directions are carefully followed, the buttermilk is most palatable and highly nutritious.

A diet then of green acid vegetables and fruits, with the addition of "turned" milk, is ideal for reducing weight and supporting bodily strength.

Just as most persons eat too much, so they exercise too little. Regulation of diet and exercise go hand in hand, espe-

cially in the pursuance of reduction cures. Systematic daily exercise, begun gently, and gradually increased as the system responds, is advised. Housework of a certain kind is ideal for the purpose: bedmaking, that necessitates stretching and bending over, is good; and that old-fashioned method of washing clothes at the tub is one of the most perfect forms of exercise ever advised for reducing the hips and abdomen, strengthening the back, and reducing the waist into shape. Of course, if a woman were advised to go to the washtub for a half hour twice a day, she would demur, but when told to dress loosely and perform certain movements, preferably in the open air, or, at least, in a room flooded with light and air—movements that are calculated to reduce her abdomen, hips, and waist—she gladly concurs.

Here they are: Plant the feet firmly upon the ground, heels together. Throw the arms above the head; now bend forward without bending the knees until the fingers touch the floor.

A stout woman will not be able to do this, but she must persist, and each day will find her finger tips a little nearer to the floor as the fat melts away. It should be pursued ten times morning and night, and gradually increased until one hundred is accomplished with ease.

The next is more difficult. Squat on the floor Turkish fashion with the feet crossed. Stretch out the arms parallel with the shoulders, and use them as a lever or balance; gradually raise the body until the erect position is reached.

It may be impossible to perform this exercise at first, but with practice, skill and dexterity are acquired, and the stretching and pulling necessary to draw the body into the erect posture soon bring about a most gratifying change in one's proportions; at the same time poise, grace, and suppleness are developed.

Purposeful walking is an invaluable aid to the reduction of flesh; walking that has this purpose ever in mind, not mere strolling and sauntering. Well equipped in comfortable walking skirt

and boots, a brisk walk of half an hour should follow the heaviest meals of the day; to enhance the flow of perspiration a rubber suit next to the body can be worn.

The wearing of heavy clothing to induce perspiration defeats its own end. Nothing must be done to fatigue the body; stimulation and rapid elimination are the objects sought. While walking briskly, select gentle inclines and slopes, as they necessitate an added exertion, and this promotes the function of the body; aid the increased breathing by inhaling deeply, thus favoring abdominal breathing and mechanical massage of the internal organs.

Carrying an alpine stock greatly facilitates walking in country places and up inclines. It also keeps the mind upon the matter of greatest interest at the moment—walking for the purpose of reduction.

Horseback riding is one of the surest means of flesh reduction at the command of those who can embrace it. Riding astride is not only recommended by physicians, but has become fashionable because reason and judgment prove it to be the most healthful posture for women. The "English trot" keeps the body in a constant state of pleasant agitation, imparting to it a rhythmic motion that facilitates the wearing away of fat cells; all the functions of the body are increased, and rapid elimination of waste matter follows.

The Zander Treatment is a form of mechanical massage in which the various motions of horseback riding, walking, running, etc., etc., can be pursued by means of devices especially constructed for this purpose.

The treatment is astonishingly productive of good results in a very short time.

Russian and Turkish baths are also a sure means to the reduction of flesh, but must be pursued with great care, and always in moderation. A special reduction salt, added to a very hot bath two or three times a week, is meeting with a great deal of favor. These reduction baths have this advantage, that



An Alpine stock is a great aid in mounting inclines.

they can be taken at home, while pursuing other treatment.

One frequently sees women whose hips have developed out of all proportion to the rest of the body, and men who grow obese through the abdomen. Local measures that tend to melt away fat can be successfully resorted to without dieting or strenuous exercises. Rubber garments made especially for certain parts of the body, and worn while those parts are exercised, either in walking or any other form of local activity indulged in, have been found of great benefit.

The external use of potassium iodide is highly recommended for the local re-

duction of overdevelopment. The following is an excellent astringent lotion:

Tincture of iodine.....	1/2 dram
Iodide of potassium.....	60 grains
Distilled water.....	10 ounces
Aniseed water.....	3 drams

Internal remedies for obesity should never be taken except under the guidance of a physician.

Note: Special diet lists, table of weights and heights, will be furnished to correspondents inclosing stamped, self-addressed envelope.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

WESTERN GIRL.—Your hair and scalp lack tone. First clip off all broken ends. Use an egg shampoo, and nightly rub into the scalp a small quantity of crude petrolatum. Apply it with the finger tips, and manipulate the scalp briskly for ten minutes; after this brush your hair briskly, giving it at least one hundred strokes. Occasionally apply this tonic:

Tincture of cantharides.....	1 ounce
Tincture of rosemary.....	1 ounce
Olive oil.....	1/2 ounce
Bay rum.....	8 ounces

LEONE W. B.—The best method for reducing the waist and hips is to stand firmly upon one spot and bend the body from the waist downward until the hands touch the floor. Repeat this one hundred times morning and night.

To reduce the bust apply the following:

Aristal	2 grains
White vaseline.....	20 grains
Essence of peppermint.....	10 drops
Mix. <i>Label Poison.</i>	

Rub this into the parts very gently every night, then cover with a cloth saturated with:

Alum	2 grains
Acetate of lead.....	30 grains
Distilled water.....	400 grains
Mix. <i>Label Poison.</i>	

Over the wet cloth spread a sheet of thin rubber, and keep in place during the night.

BROWN EYES.—No, you can pinch and rub the nose vigorously without fear of injury. A pleasing change in its size may be effected by applying the lotion given above for bust reduction. Mop this on the nose with absorbent cotton and allow it to dry in.

The treatment outlined for "Western Girl" applies in the case of your hair, too. You can improve the eyebrows by rubbing into

them every night a small quantity of crude petrolatum, and afterward brushing them carefully with a stiff brush.

M. P.—I know of no absolute remedy for general baldness; for local baldness the following ointment is recommended by a well-known authority:

Ointment of oleate of mercury (10 to 20 per cent.).....	1 ounce
Oil of eucalyptus.....	1 dram

Mix. Rub into the bald spots once or twice a day.

JOHN.—I am unalterably opposed to the use of hair dyes, at the same time approving of every endeavor to preserve one's appearance. This preparation has been successfully used to color the hair:

Logwood	3 ounces
Boiling water.....	1 pint

Boil one half hour without reducing quantity of water, strain, and when cool add:

Bay rum.....	8 ounces
Oil of lavender.....	1 dram
Glycerine	4 ounces

Apply to the hair with a brush, avoiding the scalp, as it stains whatever it touches.

GRETCHEN.—Yes, I am acquainted with Father Kneipp's Hair Tonic; it is made by boiling 200 grams of finely cut fresh nettle root in 1000 centigrams of water and 500 centigrams of vinegar for one-half hour; after the decoction has cooled it is strained. Instructions are to wash the scalp with the lotion every night before retiring.

WALTER.—A good complexion is a commercial asset, there can be no doubt upon that. You should read an article on "Facial Blemishes," that appeared in the March, 1911, number of this magazine. For the proper removal of blackheads, the skin must first be softened; they are then extracted with a tiny instrument that is sold expressly for this purpose; a watch key can also be used. The parts treated are then daubed with an astringent lotion containing:

Boracic acid.....	1 dram
Alcohol	1 ounce
Rose water.....	2 ounces

The following powder is used for dissolving blackheads:

Pure powdered borax.....	1/2 ounce
Soda	2 ounces

This is rubbed into the skin containing these blemishes, and allowed to remain on for a while; it is then removed with very hot water and an astringent soap. After the parts are thoroughly cleansed, cold water is repeatedly applied, and lastly the astringent lotion given above.

Dr. Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those enclosing a self-addressed stamped envelope. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.



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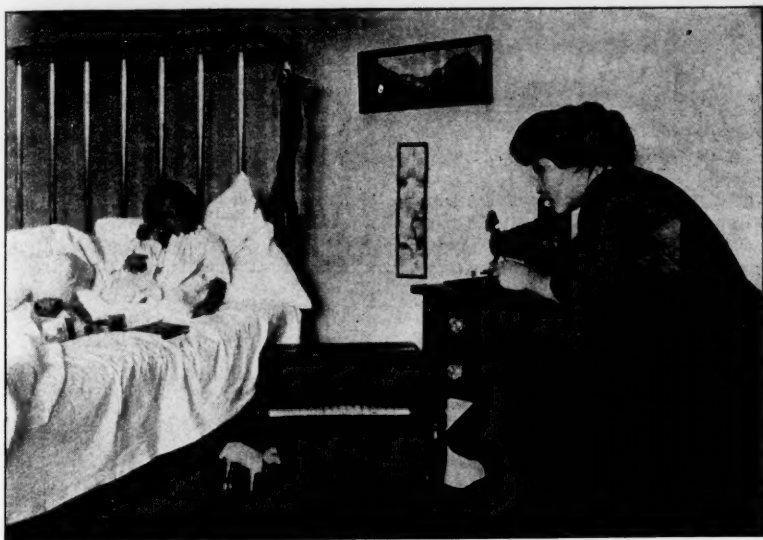
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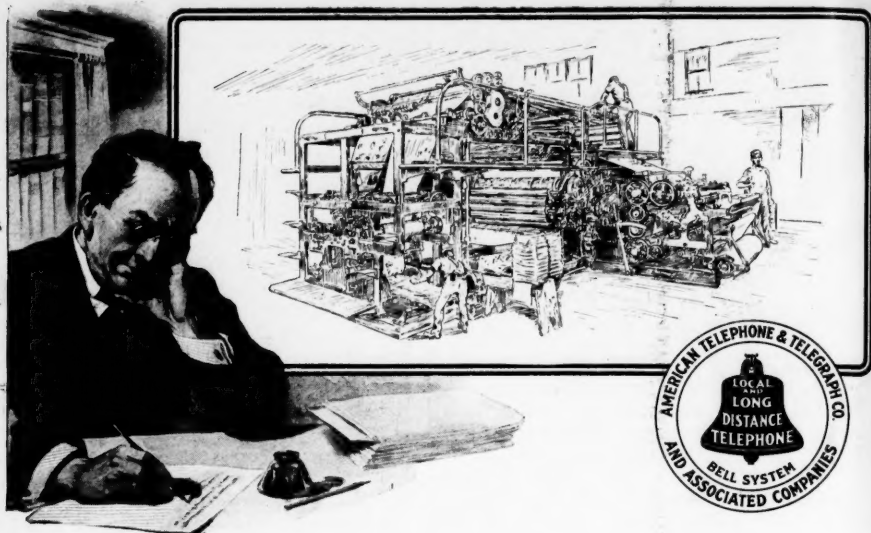
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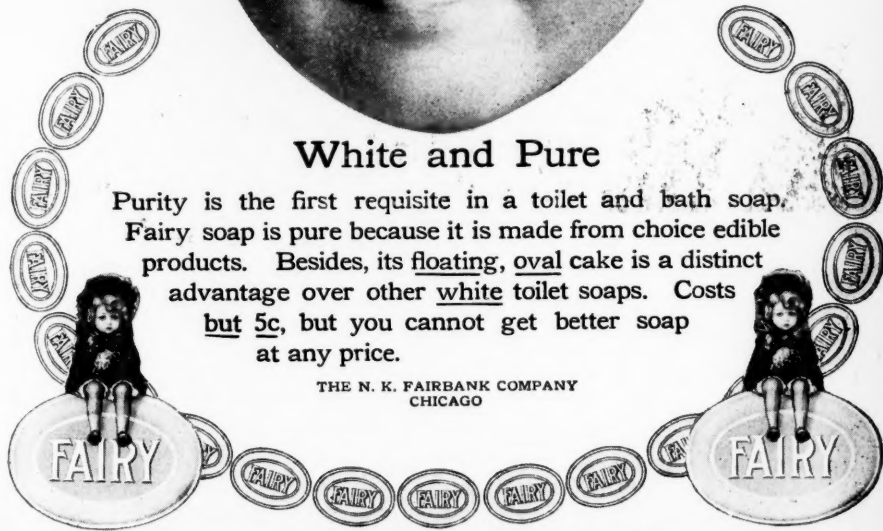
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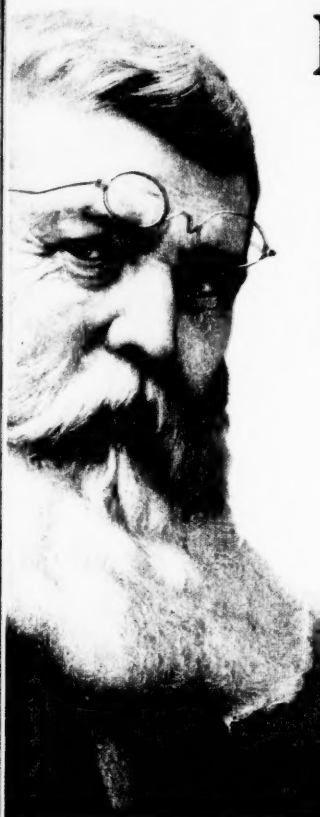
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